THE Nation.

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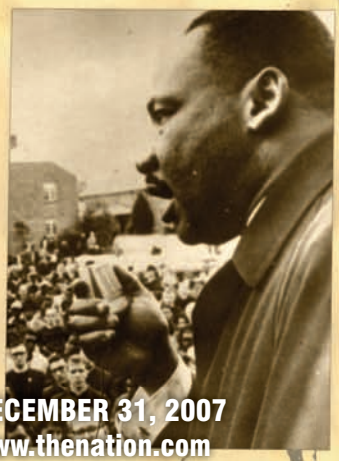
A TREE TILTS IN MoMA

Arthur C. Danto



DECEMBER 31, 2007
www.thenation.com

GARY YOUNGE

THE OBAMA EFFECT

HAVE THE DREAMS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT BEEN REALIZED OR DEFERRED?

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Letters

THE Nation.
JIMMY CARTER SPEAKS HIS MIND
ISRAEL'S TENACIOUS PEACENIK EVIL PRESS
WILL THE REAL GENERATION OBAMA PLEASE STAND UP?
LAKSHMI CHAUDHRY

Believe What You Want But Button Up

Hadensville, Va.

Despite my general agreement with Katha Pollitt's observations about the futility of atheist "conversions" ["Subject to Debate," Dec. 3], I am always troubled by believers presuming us atheists to be evangelists for our lack of belief. There have certainly been those who have proselytized for the atheist "movement," but I really cannot be bothered to concern myself with what anyone else may or may not believe.

The only thing that a committed atheist should be prepared to resist is any attempt to infuse faith-based nonsense into our governments. Each of us has a fundamental right to secular, not atheistic, governments. There is a big difference. Our governments are not permitted to take religious "sides" or positions under our Constitution. That is the promise not only of the First Amendment but also Article VI. That is so each of us will be treated fairly by the government, not to "disprove" the existence of that which cannot be disproved. (That would take a very flimsy deity, indeed!)

I almost always admit that I cannot disprove the existence of any deity. Why should I care? It is really none of my business what anyone else chooses to believe. Or not. That is what real freedom is about. It *is* my business to preserve that freedom, and I do so by insisting that my governments be secular and that people are not hurt or harassed in the name of religion.

H. Watkins Ellerson

Roll Over, Geezers

Austin, Tex.

Re Lakshmi Chaudhry's "Will the Real Generation Obama Please Stand Up?" [Dec. 3]: The biggest challenge for ambitious Generation X-ers and Senator Obama is that baby boomers won't take senior status. People are living longer and playing longer in politics, business and all leadership arenas. The kids have outgrown the kiddie table and are claiming their rightful place at the big table. Unfortunately, the boomers are not ready to make room.

We have the same maturity, experience and qualifications to lead at 46, Senator Obama's age, as boomers did at 46, Bill Clinton's age when elected President. Boomers are going to keep booming and will cling to the reins as long as they can. Alzheimer's may be Gen X's best hope!

Anthony Haley

Santa Fe

Using the demographic range assigned to the baby boom of 1946–64, Obama is very much a baby boomer himself—notwithstanding pretensions to play the Gen X (and MillGen) cards. Other assignations of Gen X-dom to pundits, bloggers, etc. born in the 1946-64 period reveal a curious boomer bigotry—with boomers (albeit late arrivals) seeking to pass as constituents of the younger group. Ultimately, Obama and any other candidate viewing the electorate sensibly will be paying court to the biggest group out there, that big demographic bulge snaking through its 50s, 60s and soon 70s, all the while remaining every bit as (perhaps more?) viable as ever.

Brian Bennett

The Lost Word

Pittsburgh

One word lacking from "Triumph of the Wills," Daniel Brook's review of Gregory Clark's *A Farewell to Alms* [Dec. 3], is "Lamarckian," as in "the inheritance of acquired characteristics." Although that wasn't the only idea Lamarck contributed to the debate about natural selection/evolution, it's the one we all associate with him, because it was wrong.

"Patience, delayed gratification, the ability to work hard, ingenuity, innovativeness and education": these are all acquired during one's lifetime and are not transmissible to one's offspring. Clark's thesis sounds ludicrous.

Carol V. Hamilton

letters@thenation.com

(continued on page 26)

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Subprime Politics

As news of the growing financial crisis and impending wave of mass foreclosures became too dire to ignore, the Bush Administration briefly roused itself from its lame-duck slumber to announce… well, not much. The Administration's plan is an entirely voluntary arrangement among the major mortgage servicers, whose primary aim seems to be salvaging investor value. It excludes hundreds of thousands of homeowners whose rates have reset, or who have missed payments or have credit scores too good to qualify. With millions huddled on roofs amid rising water, the Administration has very politely asked the bankers if they wouldn't mind sparing a couple extra life rafts.

EDITORIAL

And the water is still rising. Home prices are falling, 2.2 million households are hurtling toward foreclosure and Wall Street is caught in a credit crunch. A recession seems imminent.

The numbers splashed across the financial pages aren't just digits in a spreadsheet somewhere. Through the alchemy of modern finance, each mortgage-backed security represents front yards and driveways, sofas and cribs, pots and pans, the hierarchy of stuff and place that makes home *home*. Hundreds of thousands of families now find their destiny yoked to capital markets through mechanisms so complex even experts seem bewildered.

The financial press is smugly convinced that borrowers brought this on themselves. But that's just not true. A recent study found that in 2005, fully 55 percent of those who got subprime loans had good enough credit to qualify for less expensive prime loans. So which is more likely: that these people walked into their local mortgage lender and said, "We would like to be screwed, please," or that lenders took it on themselves to use obfuscation to do just that?

Indeed, as the facts dribble out, the whole sordid mess takes on the stench of go-to-jail fraud. The *New York Times* has reported that leading financial houses like Goldman Sachs and Deutsche Bank saw the trouble coming from mortgage securities and started reducing their exposure, all the while continuing to sell the same products to customers now taking the hit. Bush's crew can't be trusted to aggressively investigate these practices, but New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo's inquiry bears close watching.

The top priority right now is keeping people in their homes: Congress must pass legislation allowing bankruptcy judges to readjust mortgage terms; families too far underwater to avoid foreclosure should be allowed to stay in their homes as renters. If the crisis continues to grow, the government should step in to purchase securities from banks at a discounted rate and then provide refinancing and workouts for distressed homeowners. The terms for offering an underserving Wall Street an opportunity to move dubious paper off its balance sheet should be nothing less than the long overdue re-regulation of the entire financial sector: the revival of usury laws, the restoration of the Glass-Steagall Act and an end to the outrageous conflicts of interest that facilitated this debacle.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson made the case for a citizens' bailout during a recent visit to the *Nation* offices days before leading a march on Wall Street December 10. But while several helpful proposals—changes to bankruptcy law, most notably—have been introduced by Democrats in Congress, debtors have little sway in Washington. On their own, none of the imperiled homeowners have the luxury of being, in Wall Street parlance, "too big to fail." Together, though, they are. The question is, will anyone find the political will to save them?

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Laura Flanders—The Full Huckabee

VIDEO NATION

It's Our Web, Not Theirs!

Jesse Jackson on the Subprime Tsunami

Crime and Cover-Up

By November 2005, three different federal judges had issued ironclad preservation-of-evidence orders in cases involving terror suspects and Guantánamo detainees. That was when the CIA elected to destroy tapes of the interrogations and waterboarding of two suspected Al Qaeda members. To the inherent criminality of torture, add contempt of court.

EDITORIAL

The revelation of those CIA videotapes and their destruction has inspired a leakfest in Washington and Langley, with fingers pointing everywhere and nowhere. "There are other people at the agency who know about this far better than I," says CIA director Michael Hayden. Meanwhile, "other people at the agency" keep shifting blame between the legal office and the Directorate of Operations. The White House and Justice Department claim they advised the CIA to keep the tapes. But given George W. Bush's passion for extralegal imprisonment and "extreme interrogation," the agency had every reason to see mixed signals from Pennsylvania Avenue. Democratic Representative Jane Harman, informed of waterboarding and other outlaw interrogation practices in 2003, says she filed a classified letter of protest but "was not free to disclose anything." But what secrecy oath requires public servants—not only Republicans but Harman, Nancy Pelosi, Bob Graham and Jay Rockefeller—to keep silent about systematic violations of US and international law?

As Emily Bazelon and Dahlia Lithwick write in a pertinent post on *Slate*, the destroyed videotapes would have had a profound impact on the Moussaoui and Padilla trials, the Guantánamo detainee lawsuits and the September 11 commission report. If that is true, then destruction of the tapes amounts to subversion of vital American institutions and is no sideshow but a central episode in the history of post-9/11 policy. Senator Joe Biden got it right: the CIA tapes' destruction, and the violations of anti-torture statutes they recorded, require a special prosecutor. Only such an independent investigation will be free of the Bush Justice Department's long entanglement with interrogation and torture policy, and the broader culture of complicity that ensnares everyone from anonymous CIA operatives to Congressional leaders of both parties.

Playing the God Card

Mitt Romney achieved a rare political feat when he delivered his "Don't let my Mormonism cost me this election" speech. With barely twenty minutes of disjointed rhetoric about the role of faith in public life, the former Massachusetts governor made a convincing case, both to religious zealots who would erase the line of separation between church and state and to secularists who cherish that line, that the fading GOP front-runner is a poor choice to rest his hand on any book of Scripture come January 20, 2009. Romney did this by speaking as a politician rather than as a statesman in the mold of the Catholic senator from Massachusetts who told Baptist preachers in 1960 that the demarcation between religious belief and gov-

COMMENT

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erning principle must remain "absolute." Where John Kennedy majestically promised to reject religious dogma in favor of the common good, Romney merely pleaded that a particular candidate—himself—not be "rejected because of his faith."

Even as Romney demanded tolerance of his minority faith, he dismissed believing and nonbelieving secularists—"Americans acknowledge that liberty is a gift of God, not an indulgence of government"—in a manner suggesting that the line between church and state would indeed blur in a Romney administration. How was it that he struck so many wrong notes? Well, unlike Kennedy, Romney was not speaking to the mass of voters; rather, he was begging a small clique—evangelical Republicans who participate in early caucuses and primaries—to stay on his GOP bandwagon rather than hop on the church bus driven by former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee.

Unspoken by Romney—or most analysts of the Huckabee surge in Iowa, South Carolina and national polls, which now place him second only to Rudy Giuliani—is a key to the preacher's progress: an embrace of precisely the sort of religious test America's founders sought to guard against. It's not just that Huckabee is a confirmed creationist whose policy pronouncements would make Pat Robertson blush (he describes homosexuality as a sin, "just as lying is sinful and stealing is sinful," and condemns both same-sex marriage and divorce). The fact is, Huckabee and his backers have an ugly tendency to question the faith of their foes. When Fred Thompson's campaign criticized him on a Sunday, Huckabee surrounded himself with ministers and chirped, "Most of us were in church. *He* was cranking out press releases." When Huckabee and Sam Brownback competed for religious-right backing in Iowa's August straw poll, e-mails from a prominent pastor reminded evangelicals that Brownback had converted to Catholicism and urged support for Huckabee as "one of us." Requests that Huckabee denounce what Brownback's organization called a "whisper campaign" of "bigoted slurs aimed at a person's faith" were not met to the satisfaction of Brownback, who later quit the race and endorsed John McCain.

But Thompson and Brownback got off easy compared with Romney, who has long been in the cross hairs of the Huckabee campaign, which runs ads identifying its candidate as "a Christian leader." Huckabee avoids explicit pokes at Romney's faith while asking provocative questions about Mormonism, rarely distancing himself from backers who suggest that evangelicals could do better than to vote for a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Huckabee's Iowa supporters openly suggest at campaign events that Romney's "going to be acting on an anti-Christian faith as the basis of his decision-making." The Arkansan's Iowa campaign co-chair, Daniel Carroll, says Christians prefer his man over Romney because Huckabee "prays to the God of the Bible." Huckabee simply *suggests* that God prefers him. After being introduced in late November by Jerry Falwell Jr. as a candidate who "believes like we do," Huckabee told a crowd at Falwell's Liberty University, "There's only one explanation for [my surge], and it's not a human one. It's the same power that helped a little boy with two fish and five loaves feed a crowd of 5,000 people."

In the GOP race, it's not Romney's Mormonism that poses a threat to the core values of a secular nation. It is the messianic candidacy of Mike Huckabee, which seeks to apply the "religious test" for government service, a test the founders feared would be the undoing of the American experiment. JOHN NICHOLS

Noted.

IF MAYORS RAN AMERICA: In today's presidential campaign, America seems all tractor pulls, county fairs, town halls and truck stops. Candidates scramble for photo ops in plaid, stump in wheat fields and scarf down corn dogs. Yet more than 80 percent of Americans live in cities. By stressing rural voters so strongly, presidential candidates risk ignoring the bread-and-butter issues that matter most to most Americans—housing, transportation, infrastructure and crime. The candidates should, of course, have an urban agenda. But what should it be?

A new collaborative video project between *The Nation* and the **Drum Major Institute** asks the people who know our cities best: America's mayors. In ten punchy interviews, the mayors of Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, Rochester and Salt Lake City offer their prescriptions for a reinvigorated urban agenda.

The contrast between the mayors' priorities and the presidential candidates' rhetoric couldn't be more stark. "In presidential elections, the media and pollsters focus on issues like war, abortion, gay rights, things that, quite frankly, for those of us in the trenches, aren't the hot-button issues," says Miami Mayor **Manny Diaz**. "People want to know that their kids will get a good education, that their neighborhoods will be safe and clean.… It's difficult for me to understand how presidential candidates don't see that. Those are the issues that affect Americans each and every day. We [mayors] are dealing with them, and [candidates] should also be dealing with them."

Watch Diaz and the others at www.MayorTV.com for insights into urban issues, presidential politics and the elections.

TORTURE-LIKE? Many Republicans have a hard time calling torture "torture," but it seems the news desks of major papers have an equally hard time using the T-word, even when it comes to coverage of the CIA's destruction of what everyone else (including their editorialists) calls the "torture tapes." In nine *New York Times* articles since December 6, "torture" appears just thirteen times, while "interrogations" appears eighty-four times. Likewise, in four articles the *Washington Post* printed "torture" sixteen times but used "interrogations" in forty instances. "Interrogations," and other euphemisms like "methods" and "tactics," were sometimes modified as "harsh," "severe," "controversial" or "aggressive." All uses of "torture" in both papers were attributed to critics of the Administration's "tactics" or used in the context of Administration denials, as in "We do not torture"—a line these papers seem all too willing to swallow.

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Rights of Passage

COMMENT

In late September George W. Bush stood before the United Nations General Assembly and extolled a document whose sixtieth anniversary is being commemorated in a yearlong advocacy campaign that began December 10. The document is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the United Nations ratified by a vote of 48 to 0 on December 10, 1948, and which Bush hailed as "a landmark achievement in the history of human liberty," a statement that made it hard not to wonder whether, before rising to the podium, he'd gotten around to reading it. "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment," states Article 5 of the declaration. "Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law," affirms Article 6.

Bush's speech unwittingly captured the paradox the human rights movement finds itself facing on the eve of the declaration's sixtieth anniversary and Bush's final year in office. No President has wrapped his foreign policy in loftier rhetoric—or done more to discredit the notion that America's commitment to human rights is sincere. Bush's "freedom agenda," set against his Administration's disgraceful record, has convinced much of the world that the promotion of universal rights is little more than a Trojan horse for Western imperialism, and made it easier for governments from Russia to Iran to crack down on opposition groups accused of importing foreign values into their countries.

How, at this low moment, might momentum be restored to the struggle for universal rights? One possibility was suggested not long ago in Atlanta, where several dozen human rights defenders gathered for a two-day conference hosted by the Carter Center. The event drew representatives from Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America and sought to underscore how the sentiment expressed in the preamble of the declaration, which recognizes "the inherent dignity…of all members of the human family," resonates with the teachings of at least one potentially powerful cross-cultural force: religion. "We have not adequately marshaled all the potential supporters of the Universal Declaration," former President Jimmy Carter, a devout Baptist, stated in his opening remarks. "The major religions of the world need to be brought in."

Whether the major religions actually want to be brought in is, of course, open to question: all too often in the past, religious leaders have lent their support to repressive governments and invoked the name of God to justify gross abuses against women, homosexuals and so-called nonbelievers. Human rights advocates have good reason to wonder whether, in Islamabad or in Alabama, people of faith would make for model allies. But those advocates ought to pause before dismissing all such people as foes. As Carter noted, scattered across the globe are large numbers of Muslims, Christians, Jews and Hindus who reject fundamentalist dogmas and share a basic commitment to the alleviation of suffering. Among them are people like Zainah Anwar, executive director of the Malaysia-based group Sisters in Islam, who attended the conference in Atlanta. Anwar is a practicing Muslim. She is also a feminist at the forefront of the campaign to end discrimination against women in her country. While her belief that Islam and full gender equality can be reconciled is contentious—as she acknowledged, the most strident and influential imams in many countries vociferously disagree—it is not a view all Muslims uniformly reject.

If the human rights movement wants to shed its image as the secular religion of a cloistered Western elite determined to impose its values on others—a perception particularly dangerous (and to some extent understandable) in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq—forging stronger alliances with people like Anwar seems essential. There is something else that could be done to remind people outside the West that the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration bear relevance to their lives. It was pointed out to me by Timothy Njoya, a Presbyterian minister from Kenya who also attended the Carter Center conference and who, in the 1980s and '90s, helped lead the struggle for the first democratic elections in his country. Njoya has scars on his forehead and left hand from being tortured. Many Kenyans indeed view human rights as a Western concept, he said, but that's because Western NGOs and governments have long tended to focus on one category of rights—civil and political rights like freedom of speech and assembly—while ignoring another—social and economic rights like the right to shelter, education, healthcare and work. The latter rights are arguably more pressing (and at least as flagrantly violated) in many parts of the world and were included in the Universal Declaration, yet they have routinely been ignored.

This may be changing. Hina Jilani, the UN Special Representative to the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders, says that questions were often raised in the past at the UN whenever she drew attention to the work of activists battling poverty and environmental degradation. Her latest report, dedicated to such activists, drew a more supportive response. Both Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have worked to bring

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

George Bush, Upon Hearing That the Iranians Abandoned Their Nuclear Weapons Program in 2003

Our plans were made, and so well laid,
To stop them getting weapon-grade
Uranium. I said that we
Might well be facing World War Three.
So we'd do sanctions in a rush,
And then we'd bomb them into mush.
But now our operatives insist
Those plans for nukes do not exist.
Oh, woe is me. Alas, alack.
I've no more countries to attack.

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more attention to social and economic rights in recent years. Even Bush, in his address to the General Assembly, called on member states to "free people from tyranny and violence, hunger and disease…poverty and despair." Bush's words might be taken more seriously if he turned the mirror on his own country. "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services," states Article 25. It is a principle that citizens of the world's wealthiest country would surely appreciate seeing observed a bit more consistently by Washington. EYAL PRESS

Eyal Press is a Nation *contributing writer.*

Post-Annapolis Pitfalls

COMMENT

The recent Annapolis proceedings have taken the Middle East peace process out of its prolonged state of morbidity in three respects. First, they call for negotiations over "all core issues without exception." Before Annapolis, Israel refused to consider negotiations on a final-status accord before Palestinians implemented their obligation, under the 2003 road map agreement, to disarm Palestinian militants. That demand constituted the mother of all oxymorons, since no Palestinian leader could end violent resistance to the occupation in the face of Israel's refusal to reveal how much Palestinian territory it intended to retain. The Palestinians have lost to Israel fully half the territory recognized by the 1947 United Nations partition resolution as their legitimate patrimony. They are not about to renounce the right to fight, if necessary, to retain the remaining 22 percent of Palestine.

Second, by relinquishing Israel's demand that Palestinian implementation of the road map's obligations precede negotiations, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert gained the right to demand that actual implementation of an agreement can come only after Palestinians have met those obligations, a demand that President Mahmoud Abbas accepted. This too was an important advance—provided an impartial third party monitors and judges compliance by both sides.

Third, the parties accepted the US decision to serve as that monitor, a role that until now Israel had arrogated to itself. A major obstacle to implementation of all previous agreements was the absence of a third-party monitor. Whether the United States can be an impartial arbiter remains to be proven. As indicated below, things have gotten off to a very unpromising start.

These accomplishments are potentially important breakthroughs, even if they remain highly problematic. By themselves, however, they cannot overcome the failure of Annapolis to deal with a number of major remaining obstacles to an eventual peace accord.

In an effort to reassure the Israelis, the Bush Administration repeatedly declared that the US role will be limited to "facilitation." Given the discrepancies in power, wealth and influence that mark the Israeli-Palestinian relationship, a final-status agreement is inconceivable if the United States refuses to redress the imbalances between the two through its active intervention. The notion that "facilitation" alone will enable the parties to bridge their vast asymmetries is patently absurd.

That no agreement is conceivable between such radically uneven adversaries without US intervention is underlined by Bush's insistence—echoing Olmert's—that the success of the Annapolis peace process depends on Palestinian willingness to match Israeli "concessions." This demand is stunningly insensitive to the fact that Palestinians are a people under occupation. As such, they have little to offer Israel by way of concessions, other than their continued subjugation and dispossession.

Of course, Palestinians are obliged to do everything they can to bring violence under control. That is why, even after an agreement is reached, its implementation would have to be delayed until Palestinian authorities have established the rule of law in their area. As for Israel, what is expected of it are not concessions but that it meet longstanding obligations imposed by UN resolutions, international law and previous agreements with the Palestinians. To call these Israeli obligations concessions is to undermine the negotiations before they begin, for they imply that Israel and the United States can demand that Palestinians forgo their rights under existing agreements and international law if they are to deserve an end to Israel's occupation.

The position of Olmert's government has been—and continues to be even after Annapolis—that Israel will not return to the pre-1967 border, that Israel will remain the sole sovereign in Jerusalem and that not a single refugee will be let back into Israel. Allowing that Palestinians will have to show flexibility in the implementation of their rights, particularly with regard to the demand for a significant return of refugees to Israel, it remains the case that these are indeed Palestinian rights, as defined by UN resolutions, the road map and international law. Israel is being asked to cease its violations of these rights, with its confiscations of Palestinian territory for settlements and outposts and housing projects that are intended to deny Palestinians a presence in any part of Jerusalem. For the United States to characterize Israeli demands for Palestinian giveaways as reciprocity for Israeli concessions is to add insult to injury—particularly since one would be hard put to identify a single concession Israel has made to the Palestinians.

These obstacles aside, Washington must abandon the fantasy that an Israeli-Palestinian agreement can be reached and implemented in the face of deep divisions between Fatah and Hamas, divisions that Israel and the United States have deliberately fostered. Palestinian acceptance of "painful compromises," not to speak of their implementation, will be extraordinarily difficult in the best of circumstances. They are impossible without Palestinian unity. Instead of seeking to heal this Palestinian breach, the United States and Israel have sought to widen it, in the entirely unrealistic expectation that showering economic and other "gifts" on Abbas in the West Bank while strangling Gaza will lead to the defeat of Hamas.

For starters, promises to empower Abbas by removing obstacles and checkpoints that have shattered Palestinian life have been made repeatedly in the past, only to be repeatedly ignored by Israel's security and military establishment. Defense Minister Ehud Barak has left no doubt this will not change. Neither Palestinians nor Israelis take these promises seriously any longer; if Bush still believes them, he is the only one who does.

Furthermore, continued strangulation of Gaza in the face of

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promised West Bank prosperity will only further weaken Abbas, who will be portrayed as a Palestinian Pétain, and fuel violence and terrorism that, at their first manifestation, will predictably serve as Israel's pretext for abandoning negotiations.

Despite these formidable obstacles, optimists insist that if negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians proceed in good faith, it is possible that a more positive chemistry between the parties will somehow enable them to reach commonly desired objectives. Perhaps. But the problem is that instead of good faith, unimaginably bad faith has been manifested, even before the ink of Annapolis's joint statement has dried.

Olmert and his predecessor, Ariel Sharon, repeatedly promised they would remove every last "illegal outpost" and freeze settlement expansion in the West Bank. It is the very first of several obligations imposed on Israel by the road map. To this day, Israel is in flagrant violation of those promises.

The only thing Olmert seems to recall about the road map—other than its requirement that Palestinians fight terror—is Bush's 2004 opinion in his letter to Sharon that Israel should be able to hold on to its settlement blocs in the West Bank, the road map's provisions to the contrary notwithstanding. But Bush has no more right to unilaterally alter an international agreement than has Olmert or Abbas.

Olmert solemnly promised in Annapolis to freeze settlement construction and dismantle the illegal outposts. This undertaking was a condition for the participation of Arab countries. But two days after the adjournment of Annapolis the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* revealed that Olmert's colleagues—several deputy prime ministers and cabinet ministers—are instead surreptitiously planning to "launder" the outposts' illegal status, enlarge them and provide government support for their development into permanent settlements. As to the freezing of settlement growth, Peace Now and Israeli human rights groups have documented how Olmert gets around this inconvenience by simply attaching the names of old settlements to the new ones and calling them extensions of existing settlements.

Olmert's government has also announced new construction in the Har Homa area of East Jerusalem, intended to close it off from its Palestinian hinterland. The government's explanation for this is its intention to retain all Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, limiting negotiations to the Arab neighborhoods. This is in blatant disregard of the Annapolis understandings and in violation of the specific provision of the road map. Israel has no more right to determine unilaterally the status of any part of East Jerusalem than do the Palestinians.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has said that the new construction in Har Homa "doesn't help build confidence." This breathtaking understatement, the failure to suggest that such violations may incur international sanctions and the Administration's silence on the subject of Israel's continuing enlargement of settlements and outposts should tell Abbas and the international community all they need to know about what kind of impartiality to expect from America in its new role of "monitor and judge" of the peace process.

It also exposes the fatuousness of the Quartet (the UN, the EU, Russia and the United States) and the innocence of those who lecture Palestinians about institution building. We know the half-life of the institutions Palestinians have already built: only their rubble remains, and it should serve as a reminder of the futility of such efforts in the absence of understandings that show some awareness of the Palestinians' ongoing dispossession and respect for their political rights. HENRY SIEGMAN

Henry Siegman is director of the US/Middle East Project. He is also a research professor at the Sir Joseph Hotung Middle East Program at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Siegman served as a senior fellow on the Middle East at the Council on Foreign Relations from 1994 to 2006.

Comix Nation

by PETER KUPER

I Want a New Drug
A report on medication awaiting FDA approval
IRAQSIC
What is it good for? Absolutely nothing. A bitter pill that's hard to swallow, administration has produced uncontrolled lying leading to internal conflicts, physical torture, financial hemorrhaging and increased terror. However, there have been no signs of withdrawal.
APOCALYPO-SUCTION
This antidepressant fights global warming sensations, blocks contemplation of reality/future and suppresses ability to connect dots.
Side effects include: High temperature, dry mouth, night sweats, severe burning, water retention, mass extinction.
Preparation "A"
This final solution is limited to one large dose and claims to be the last drug you'll ever need. Testing leaves grave doubts and radiation for generations.
Side effect: End of life as we know it.
KUPER

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Locked Up in Limbo

Prisons are an outsized business in California, and these days Californians have an outsized monument to their fear of something prisons cannot contain: sex crimes. At Coalinga State Hospital sex offenders who have served prison terms are serving more time, having been involuntarily committed as "sexually violent predators." Californians appear determined to fill the place and then some, as a referendum last November expanded the commitment law to make virtually every sex offender in the prison system eligible for lifetime detention. And so the numbers at Coalinga, now about 670, will never stop growing.

COMMENT

Coalinga is preventive detention in perfect form. The inmates are confined for what they think, or what they might do if released or, more precisely, what a psychologist guesses they might do. If that seems unconstitutional in a 1970s kind of way, the courts are largely unmoved. And if people are locked up for years before a court asks too many questions, it is because of what some lawyers call "the pedophile exception to the due-process clause."

Maybe it would be surprising if America, now accustomed to the terrorist exception to the Constitution, was *not* warm to a pedophile exception. But legal scholars and psychiatric experts have almost nothing good to say about using the mental health system to institutionalize offenders. The idea has proven an especially bad one in California, whose mental hospital system is under federal monitoring because of widespread civil rights violations. The costs of running Coalinga, already galloping, are compounded by the costs of processing thousands more offenders; under the new Jessica's Law, the number referred for evaluation has risen from fifty to about 750 each month.

In its enthusiasm for preventive detention, California, as is its tendency, is like all America—only more so. The word "predator," not so long ago a mere metaphor, has come to encompass flashers and peeping toms, and locking up the whole lot of them has become a legislative reflex across the country. Eric Janus, president and dean of the William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul and the author of *Failure to Protect*, about the civil commitment laws, refers to a "third wave" in the last couple of years.

Around 1990 a handful of states rewrote their mental health laws to reel in sex offenders—most of whom were not mentally ill by any definition—as their prison terms expired. In the mid-'90s, especially after the Supreme Court upheld Kansas's Sexually Violent Predator Act, a dozen others followed suit. The panic flared again in 2006 and '07: New Hampshire and New York enacted commitment laws, and a change in Virginia's law quickly tripled its detainee population. Congress approved the civil commitment of sex offenders in federal prisons, including the growing percentage who land there on pornography charges.

"I was thinking probably it was going to go away, with states scared off by the financial burden," Janus said. "But what with New York jumping in, that's a bellwether state in some ways. It would be a little surprising if it didn't spread further."

At this point legislators need not worry about the courts. The laws may rely on a web of legal fictions—that the inmates are psychiatric patients, that their detention is not punitive, that actuarial tests can predict their behavior—but they are Supreme Court–approved fictions. In the 1997 decision *Kansas v. Hendricks* Justice Clarence Thomas wrote that the offenders were not being punished and that their rights to personal liberty were outweighed by the demands of public safety.

The pronouncement that the commitments are civil rather than criminal makes it possible to dispense with a lot of fact-finding. Civil commitment does not require the constitutional protections afforded defendants accused of, say, kiting checks or stealing cars. The process can skirt concerns like cross-examining accusers or airing exculpatory evidence. It can rely on psychiatrists who may base their opinions on any evidence at all, including accounts of long-ago offenses that were never investigated or heard by a court. Some states do not allow juries or open hearings.

The California law provides for a trial, but not a speedy one. Defense lawyers detect no sense of urgency on the state's part, and a spokesman for the Coalinga residents, Niles Carr, says about half do not have lawyers assigned to them. Carr himself is temporarily committed; he's been awaiting trial for nine years.

The federal commitment law took a hit in September when a federal district judge held that Congress did not have the authority to confine people leaving federal prisons—although the states could do it. Three of the five plaintiffs, who were certified as "sexually dangerous persons" and held at the prison in Butner, North Carolina, had served time for receiving or possessing child pornography. There's no telling from the decision whether any of the pornography defendants poses a danger to anyone beyond his computer screen. But the case invites questions about whether prosecutors are in fact capturing the people they so often call "the worst of the worst."

The worst of the worst are, in fact, being imprisoned for longer and longer terms. Among the more than 4,000 men who have been committed under these laws in twenty states are many indisputably violent criminals—though few murderers. There are men who assaulted women. There are flashers and voyeurs, legions of child molesters whose crimes did not involve force or penetration and gay men who had sex with teenagers. (In some states, soliciting a minor is a qualifying offense.)

Treatment may or may not be a fiction. Most Coalinga inmates do not participate in treatment, in part because therapists' reports can be used against them in court. Those who do follow the program, in California as elsewhere, almost never satisfy their jailers. More than 200 men identified as sexually violent predators by the state's Mental Health Department have been released by the courts, usually without any treatment, but, according to spokeswoman Nancy Kincaid, the department has never recommended release. When it tracked ninety-three of those released over a six-year period, it found that six had been arrested for new sex crimes.

As for the pileup of new candidates awaiting evaluation, Kincaid said very few would be committed. But Coalinga has plenty of room. It was built two years ago, at a cost of $388 million, to house 1,500 men. In California, that's barely a start.

LAURA MANSNERUS

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Alexander Cockburn

Congress to CIA Torturers: 'If Only You'd Told Us'

If there was ever a parable about the futility of Congressional "oversight," it's surely the uproar over the CIA's secret destruction of the videotapes of its torture sessions with the Al Qaeda men Abu Zubaydah and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri. Here we have the spectacle of members of the CIA oversight committees, like Senator Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia, saying virtuously that the CIA never told them at the time about deep-sixing the videos. If true, the CIA was stupid. All the agency needed to have done was set up a secret viewing room on Capitol Hill and hold "last peek before we burn them" sessions. Sworn to silence, a few senators and reps would have trooped along, no doubt with Larry Craig in the front row hogging three seats with his wide stance. The CIA says it did brief key legislative overseers about torture techniques in about thirty private briefings. Democrats thus briefed included Pelosi, Harman and Rockefeller, along with Republicans Graham and Goss. With one unknown exception the politicians said it all looked fine to them, except the CIA should be rougher.

It's all in the labeling. Former CIA interrogator John Kiriakou says he used to think waterboarding wasn't torture but an enhanced interrogation technique—even though he refused to inflict it after experiencing it. Now that he's retired he thinks torture is the word to use. In the Algerian war of independence, the French general Jacques Massu had a twelve-volt battery clipped to his body to see how bad it was before he OK'd its use in interrogation, or so the story goes—though his torturers certainly finished off many of their victims. Let all these fence-hoppers, on the Hill or in the government or on the campaign trail, pontificating on what is or is not torture, get waterboarded, subjected to isolation, intense sound, savage cold, starvation and frequent physical abuse. Then let them give their opinion.

The CIA continues to maintain it doesn't go in for torture. As Jeffrey St. Clair and I describe in detail in *Whiteout*, our book on the CIA (available at www.counterpunch.org), the documented record of its savageries in this area goes back decades, starting with the recruitment of Nazi torture technicians in Operation Paperclip. The 1950s saw its increasing obsession with brainwashing and sensory deprivation. The CIA supplied the interrogators for the Phoenix program in Vietnam. Witnesses in Congress in 1972 testified that the torturers cut off fingers, ears and testicles, used electroshock, shoved wooden sticks through the skulls and into the brains of some prisoners and rammed electric probes up the rectums of others. Bart Osborn, a US Army Intelligence officer, told Congress in 1972, "I never knew in the course of all these operations any detainee to live through his interrogation. They all died." In 1968, in Bien Hoa prison outside Saigon, CIA psychologists—frustrated by their failure to break their captives—performed horrifying atrocities.

Down the years, the CIA has methodically destroyed records on matters pertaining to torture, assassination and mind control. Every decade there are protestations that malpractices have definitively ceased, usually just before the tenure of the CIA director making the claim ends. Every decade they continue.

Even today, though the Bush Administration is pro-torture, the CIA shrinks from the word, preferring more genteel vocabulary, like "harsh interrogation." This prudery has now landed the agency in its public relations debacle, trying to explain (a) why in 2002 it secretly videotaped "harsh interrogation" of two members of Al Qaeda, and (b) why it secretly destroyed these tapes in 2005.

Explanation for the videotaping takes the pious line that the CIA gave supervisors the ability to assess whether harsh interrogation had slipped over the line into the no-no land of torture. What they were actually doing to Zubaydah and Nashiri was abusing them physically in various violent forms, ultimately suffocating them underwater—the notorious "waterboarding"—and the more plausible explanation is that the videotaping was for training purposes. If the sessions were being filmed to ensure only legal applications of force, then why hastily destroy the tapes three years later? The CIA says destruction was prompted by the fear that the tapes might surface in some court proceeding or as reality TV and the CIA interrogators would be identified by hostile elements. Translation: the tapes were conclusive evidence of felonious conduct, and the head of Clandestine Operations ordered them destroyed.

The White House, still incandescent with rage about the recent National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's nonproduction of nukes—one in which the CIA was of course involved—is taking enormous pleasure in expressing official dismay at this attempt to purge the historical record. Since Bush's posture toward archival data is like that of the early Christians to the great library in Alexandria, it's amazing the White House press official didn't burst out laughing as she made this claim.

The uproar has reignited the familiar debate about torture, with the emphasis on utility rather than moral principle. The retired CIA interrogator Kiriakou says that after thirty-five seconds of water torture Zubaydah babbled out Al Qaeda's plans for attack on the Christian West, and thus thousands of lives were saved. A somewhat different assessment can be found in Ronald Suskind's recent book *The One Percent Doctrine*, based on many interviews with intelligence officials. They told Suskind that the CIA team that captured Zubaydah soon determined he was not a senior Al Qaeda man and furthermore was clinically insane. Nonetheless, they grilled him with great brutality. Frantic with pain and terror, he shrieked out one imaginary plot after another, including planned assaults on New York's water supplies, nuclear plants, shopping malls, banks, the Brooklyn Bridge. At each disclosure, Suskind writes, "thousands of uniformed men and women raced in a panic to each…target." Thus "the United States would torture a mentally disturbed man and then leap, screaming, at every word he uttered." ■

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Katha Pollitt

Ho-Ho-Holiday Donations, 2007 Edition

Because everyone you know already has a scarf. Because the presidential primaries are not the only thing happening in the world.

Because you will be happier if you multiply your good fortune by giving generously—extravagantly!—to these amazing groups.

1. The Women's Health Initiative of HEARTT. Under Africa's first woman president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Liberia is emerging from a devastating, protracted civil war, and its healthcare system is pretty much in ruins. Only about fifty Liberian doctors serve a nation of 5 million people, one reason Liberia has the world's highest newborn mortality rate; high rates of HIV, malaria, TB, obstetric fistula and maternal mortality; very little access to family planning; and very little capacity to care for the disadvantaged—i.e., almost everybody, especially women. The WHI, set up just in time for this column and your gifts, will fund prenatal care, safe maternity and family planning at Monrovia's JFK Hospital (HEARTT Women's Health Initiative, Box 1097, Stratford, CT 06614; through January, online donations at heartt.net will go to the WHI).

2. Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center. The scandal of Katrina continues. Most media coverage focuses on the challenge to homeowners, but New Orleans has always had a high proportion of renters—now priced out of a tight, booming market even as FEMA evicts thousands of poor people from its horrible trailers. GNOFHAC fights against racial discrimination in housing and for affordable housing (GNOFHAC, attn: Katrina Relief Effort, 228 St. Charles Avenue, Suite 1035, New Orleans, LA 70130; gnofairhousing.org).

3. Tipitina's Foundation. The New Orleans musical community was—is—a national joy. Help keep it going by giving to the Instruments A Comin' school band program and bringing along the next generation. So far, it has provided students with $800,000 worth of instruments, but thousands more await a chance to play. And yes, if you have a band instrument you're not using, they want it. You can also help fund instruments and delight the music lover on your gift list by ordering the CDs *Goin' Home: A Tribute to Fats Domino* or *Fats Domino: Alive and Kicking*, the musician's post-Katrina recording (Tipitina's Foundation, attn: donations, 4040 Tulane Avenue, Suite 8000, New Orleans, LA 70119; tipitinasfoundation.org).

4. The Women's Lodge. Charon Asetoyer, a tireless campaigner against South Dakota's misbegotten and ultimately unsuccessful abortion ban, runs the Women's Lodge on the Yankton Sioux reservation, which aids women fleeing domestic violence and sex abuse—rape counseling, transportation, legal assistance, help with utilities, groceries and finding work. This year the Lodge is trying to raise $55,000 for transitional housing so that women and their children have an alternative to living in danger or sleeping on a shelter floor. That doesn't seem a lot to ask, does it? (make checks out to "Native American Community Board" with NAWHERC on the memo line, Box 572, Lake Andes, SD 57356; nativeshop.org).

5. International Rescue Committee. More than 4 million Iraqis have fled their homes because of violence, at least 2.2 million within Iraq and 1.8 million to other countries. This venerable NGO assists them in Jordan and southern Iraq, where many are living in desperate conditions, and will soon expand to Syria and northern Iraq. These are people who, thanks to our unprovoked and illegal war, have lost everything. Remember the Pottery Barn rule? We broke it; we have to fix it (write "Iraqi refugee relief" on your check; IRC, Box 98152, Washington, DC 20090-8152; theirc.org).

6. Vietnam Vets Against the War. It's a different war, but VVAW is still organizing against it. These hardy campaigners wage protests, support soldiers who resist the war, address classrooms, demystify the false promises of recruiters, help homeless veterans and support Iraq Veterans Against the War. They run on a shoestring, and Howard Zinn says we should send them money—and I always try to do what Howard Zinn says (VVAW National Office, Box 408594, Chicago, IL 60640; vvaw.org).

7. National Network of Abortion Funds. Before the Hyde amendment, some 300,000 poor women received Medicaid funding for their abortions annually. Since then, only a handful. Roughly one in five low-income women say they were unable to afford an abortion when they needed one. Last year the NNAF helped around 22,000 women pay for their procedures. This year the first fifty new donors who give $50 or more will receive a copy of *Learning to Drive*, my new collection of personal essays, which I will sign to any name you like (NNAF, 42 Seaverns Avenue, Boston, MA 02130; nnaf.org).

8. Libri Foundation. Showing what one determined person with a great idea can accomplish, the Libri Foundation, founded in 1989 by Oregon librarian Barbara McKillip in her living room, today provides dozens of small, underfunded rural libraries each year with new high-quality children's books. Feeling pinched? You can send the foundation a book—just one book!—through its amazon.com wish list (Libri, Box 10246, Eugene, OR 97440; librifoundation.org).

9. Women for Afghan Women. Afghanistan is one of the world's poorest countries, where billions of development dollars have been wasted by a large cast of schemers. This group is different. Headed by the indefatigable Fahima Vorgetts, the WAW's Afghan Women's Fund provides material aid, healthcare and literacy classes, vocational training and organizes small businesses and women's co-ops. AWF has built three girls' schools and will be starting construction on a fourth in the spring. For $50 a month, you can support an orphan and give him or her a shot at a future (make checks out to WAW/AWF, 978 Yachtsman Way, Annapolis, MS 21403; womenforafghanwomen.org).

Check out the online edition (www.thenation.com) of this column for more suggestions. Happy giving! ■

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THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Katrina vanden Heuvel,
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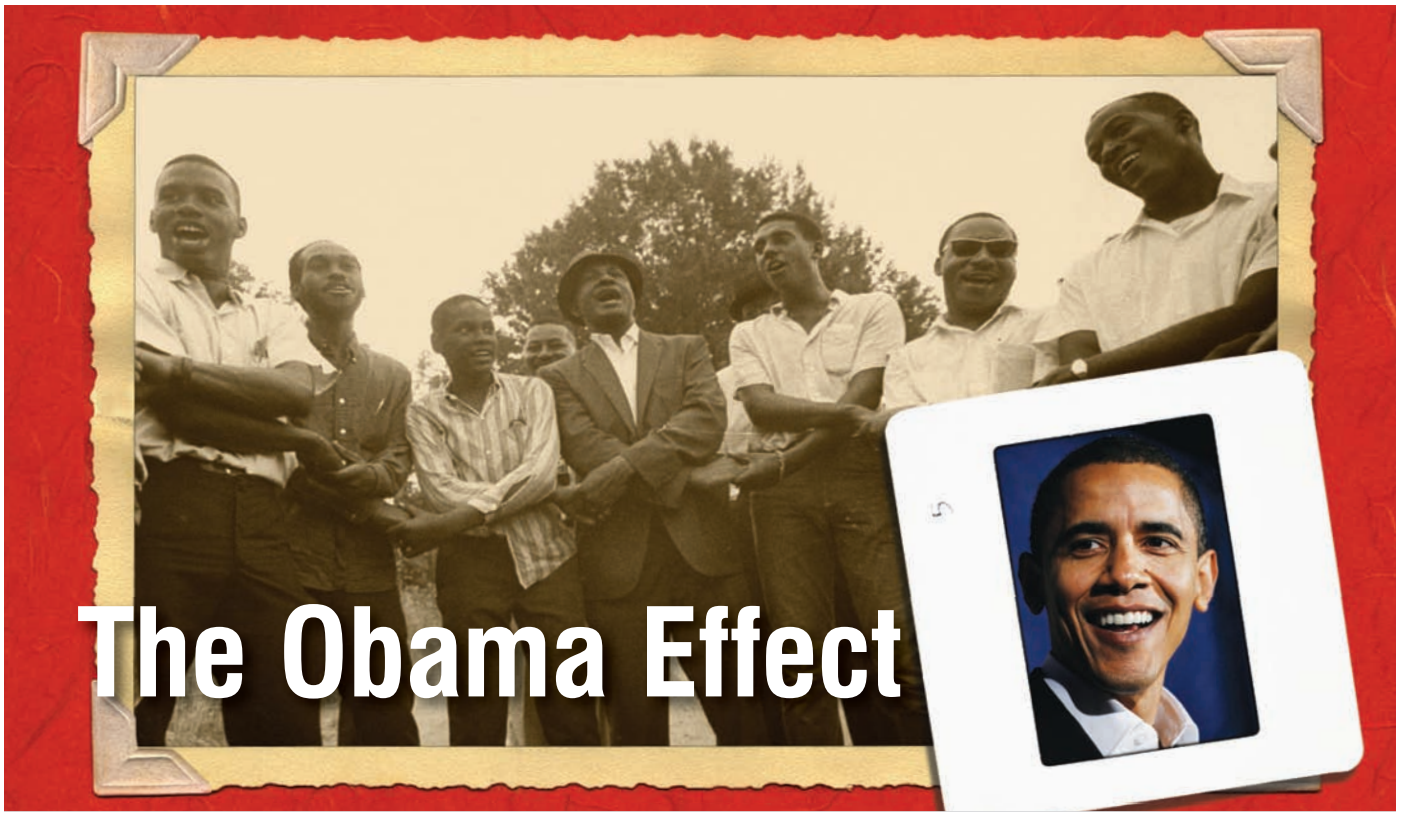

The Obama Effect

The senator's presidential campaign thrust the post–civil rights generation into the limelight. Pundits cheered. Hearts swelled. But has the dream been realized, or deferred?

by GARY YOUNGE

At around the age of 7, Barack Obama saw a picture in *Life* magazine of a black man who had tried to peel his skin off, and Obama had an epiphany. "I imagine other black children, then and now, undergoing similar moments of revelation," he wrote in *Dreams From My Father*. "I know that seeing that article was violent for me, an ambush attack."

At around the same time, the Rev. Jesse Jackson was involved in a quite different ambush attack. At Martin Luther King's side when he was assassinated by a sniper's bullet, Jackson appeared on television the next day with the civil rights leader's blood on his shirt. The formative events that shaped the last generation of black leadership could not be more different from those that have informed this one.

Obama was born in 1961, the year the Freedom Riders rolled through the South and were met with chains, clubs and firebombs. He was just 2 when Dr. King made his "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington. By his seventh birthday, both King and Malcolm X had been assassinated, and Congress had moved to protect a right to vote he wouldn't be able to exercise for another eleven years. Obama knows those years and places only from the history books, and even that knowledge is less than reliable. When he went to Selma, Alabama, to address the Brown Chapel AME church on the anniversary of Bloody Sunday earlier this year, he credited the demonstration for enabling his parents, a mixed-race couple, to fall in love. It turned out he had been born four years earlier.

Obama is the most prominent figure in what has been cast as a new generation in black politics. It's an illustrious list that includes, to name a few, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick, Newark Mayor Cory Booker, former Tennessee Congressman and Democratic Leadership Council chair Harold Ford Jr., Maryland Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown and Washington Mayor Adrian Fenty. As the civil rights movement forced open the doors of academe, corporate America and elite universities, this new generation strode through. Booker is a graduate of Yale Law School and a Rhodes scholar; Obama went to Columbia and Harvard law; Patrick and Brown were at Harvard. Ford was at the University of Pennsylvania.

The emergence of this cohort has filled the commentariat with joy—not just because of what they are: bright, polite and, where skin tone is concerned, mostly light—but because of what they are not. They have been hailed not just as a development in black American politics but as a repudiation of black American politics; not just as different from Jesse Jackson but the epitome of the anti-Jesse.

"[Obama] is in many ways the full flowering of a strain of up-tempo, non-grievance, American-Dream-In-Color politics," wrote Terence Samuel in *The American Prospect* recently. "His counterparts are young, Ivy League professionals, heirs to the civil-rights movement who are determined to move beyond both the mood and the methods of their forebears."

There are many problems with this. Chief among them is

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that this "new generation" is itself a crude political construct built more on wishful thinking than on chronological fact. Patrick, born in 1956, is hailed as part of it, but hapless New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin, who was born the same year, and civil rights campaigner Al Sharpton, who was born just two years earlier, are not. Obama and Booker are always mentioned as members of this new club, but Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr., who was born between them and spent his twenty-first birthday in prison protesting apartheid, is not.

So whatever else this is about, it is not just about years. It is one thing to say there is a critical mass of black politicians of a certain age and political disposition. It is entirely another to claim that they represent the views of a generation.

Moreover, those who constructed the model forgot to build any women into it. Donna Brazile, who in 2000 became the first African-American to direct a major presidential campaign, is rarely mentioned in their number, even though she is younger than Patrick. Nor is Donna Edwards, who in 2006 mounted a strong challenge to Albert Wynn in Maryland in a generational battle royal that will see round two in 2008.

The older generation of black politicians—those decried as pursuing narrow racial interests—created the conditions for a new political class.

But the champions of this new generation have their hearts set on a symbol far greater than a more diverse electoral landscape. At the very least the post–civil rights cohort represents proof of the nation's unrelenting progress and boundless opportunities. "They've lived the dream, and represent a generation of black Americans who do not feel cut off from the larger society," writes Samuel.

At most it does not just mark a new chapter in America's racial history; it shreds the entire book and then burns the remains. To some this period, which has seen voter disenfranchisement in Florida, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the Jena Six cases, is not only post–civil rights but postracial. "Obama embodies and preaches the true and vital message that in today's America, the opportunities available to black people are unlimited if they work hard, play by the rules, and get a good education," wrote Stuart Taylor Jr. in *National Journal*.

In 1925 Alain Locke, a professor of philosophy at historically black Howard University, hailed the emergence of the "New Negro" as it related to the Harlem Renaissance. "Hitherto, it must be admitted that American Negroes have been a race more in name than in fact, or to be exact, more in sentiment than in experience. The chief bond…has been that of a common condition rather than…a life in common. In Harlem, Negro life is seizing upon its first chances for group expression and self determination."

More than eighty years later the value of the new "Negro" leadership is, it seems, directly proportional to its distance from the black community and its experiences. Its cheerleaders desire not so much to refashion black politics as to eliminate it altogether, not so much to eliminate racism as to eradicate discussion of it. This is not necessarily the fault of politicians. But it is their challenge.

"[Obama] is being consumed as the embodiment of color blindness," says Angela Davis, professor of history of consciousness at the University of California, Santa Cruz. "It's the notion that we have moved beyond racism by not taking race into account. That's what makes him conceivable as a presidential candidate. He's become the model of diversity in this period…a model of diversity as the difference that makes no difference. The change that brings no change."

Commenting on the presidential ritual of pardoning one turkey in the run-up to Thanksgiving, Arundhati Roy once said, "A few carefully bred turkeys…the occasional Colin Powell or Condoleezza Rice…are given absolution and a pass to Frying Pan Park. The remaining millions lose their jobs, are evicted from their homes, have their water and electricity connections cut and die of AIDS. Basically they're for the pot.… Who can say that turkeys are against Thanksgiving? They participate in it!"

What is true of the Republican Administration is differently true of American society. The older generation of black politicians—those decried as pursuing narrow racial interests—created the conditions for a new political class and a new agenda. So although the way this "new generation" has been characterized is misleading and self-serving, it does not mean that they represent nothing at all.

Their résumés are relevant. During the latter half of the last century black leaders rose in politics primarily through religious institutions, which since slavery had been one of the few autonomous areas of black life. "The principal social institution within every black community was the church," wrote Manning Marable in *Black Leadership*. "As political leaders, the black clergy were usually the primary spokespersons for the entire black community, especially during periods of crisis. As the political system became more democratic and as more blacks were permitted to participate in voting, it was only a small shift from running a large church to running for public office." In other words, they emerged from organizations that had an organic link with the black community, and their advancement was inextricably tied to a broader agenda that advanced the interests of black people.

If religion was the principal conduit into the political class, it also played a crucial role in shaping black political culture. "To some extent, this tradition has been characterized by a charismatic or dominating political style," Marable wrote. It was a "messianic style" that produced stronger leaders than it did movements. After King died, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference never really recovered; when Malcolm X was shot, the Organization of Afro-American Unity virtually died with him. When Jesse Jackson stopped running for President, the Rainbow Coalition ceased to have any significant influence. "The difference between the Christian Coalition and

Gary Younge, the Alfred Knobler Journalism Fellow at The Nation Institute, is the New York correspondent for the Guardian *and the author of* No Place Like Home: A Black Briton's Journey Through the Deep South *and* Stranger in a Strange Land: Travels in the Disunited States.

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"THE WAY WE WERE"

When Florida Attorney Norm Kent received a form letter from Sen. Norm Coleman condemning marijuana, Kent fired off this note to his former Hofstra University smoking buddy.

My friend Norman,

Years ago, in a lifetime far away, you did not oppose the legalization of marijuana... Sure, we had to tape the doors shut, burn incense and open the windows...yet we grew up okay, without the help of the Office of National Drug Control Policy's advice.

We grew up to become lawyers. Our other friends, as you go down the list, are doctors, professors, parents, political consultants and professionals. No one ever got cancer from smoking pot or diabetes from using a joint.

You never said then that pot was dangerous. What was scary then, and is as frightening now, is when national leaders become voices of hypocrisy, harbingers of the status quo, and protect their own position instead of the public good.

In your public life, as an attorney general, mayor and United States senator, you have been in the forefront of speaking out against abuses which are harmful. You have been a noble and honorable public servant... How about admitting that if the Rockefeller drug laws were applied to Norman Bruce Coleman on Long Island in 1968, or to me, or to our friends, and fellow students, you, I and others we knew and loved might just be getting out of jail now?

How about standing up and saying: "I, Norm Coleman, smoked pot in 1969." That "I am not a gang member, a drug addict or a criminal." How about saying: "I was able to responsibly integrate my prior pot use into my life, and still succeed on my own merits."

How about standing up not only for who you are, but who you were?

Norm Kent

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the Rainbow Coalition is that the Christian Coalition exists," a former Jackson aide told me.

So by the time this new generation of leaders came of age, no black-led movement existed, and while most have been active members of predominantly black churches, these would not provide the vehicle for their ascent. Having usually arrived on the political scene through business or academe, they are not so much produced by the black community as presented to it. "We used to think there was a black community. It was always heterogeneous, but we were always able to imagine us as part of that community. That's no longer possible," says Davis. "I don't think it's possible to mobilize black communities in the way that it was in the past…. I don't even know that I would even look for black leadership now. That category assumes a link between race and progressive politics."

This, more than tortured explanations of ethnic authenticity, explains the initial ambivalence black voters display toward many of these candidates. They have no idea who they are and want to know where they are coming from and whom they plan to represent. "Are they black enough?" is often shorthand for a universal voter concern: "Will they represent my interests?"

The main thing the new leaders have in common is that they don't scare white people. At least, not too many and not too much.

Given the manner in which these politicians are depicted as going "beyond racial politics," the concerns of black voters are well founded. The records of this "talented tenth" are mixed. Booker has so far concentrated primarily on fighting crime in Newark and is a strong advocate of school vouchers. Patrick has been rolling back the more egregious policies of his predecessor, Mitt Romney, by rescinding the ban on embryo research and decriminalizing undocumented immigrants. He has also championed casino gambling, property tax relief and state health insurance. Fenty has been criticized for being secretive and authoritarian since he took over the DC school system with the aim of radically improving some schools, closing others and giving the schools chancellor the right to fire nonunion workers.

Obama was criticized by some black leaders for not speaking out more forcefully on the Jena Six incident. "If I were a candidate, I'd be all over Jena," Jackson said after a speech at the historically black Benedict College in South Carolina. "Jena is a defining moment, just like Selma was a defining moment." By not seizing on the issue more, Jackson claimed, Obama was "acting like he's white." (Jackson later said his comment was misrepresented; the *State* newspaper of Columbia stood by its reporting.) But the parallels Jackson drew shed light on the key differences between his campaign and Obama's. For if he were the candidate he wouldn't be doing as well as Obama, and the reason is less because Obama is "acting white" than because he is making every effort not to act "too black."

Indeed, the main thing the new leaders have in common is that they don't scare white people. Or at least not too many and not too much. This is not an entirely accidental or insignificant fact. For while they do not control the way they are perceived, they do have some influence over how they come across. "In so much of the work I've done, I've found that you had to put people at ease on the question of race before you could even start to talk about what you were doing," explains Patrick. "I don't fit a certain expectation that some people have about black men. And I don't mean that as anything other than an observation about my life."

This is a sad but honest reflection on the reality of black middle-class life in America. Anyone who wants to make it in a predominantly white world has to navigate racism in all its subtlety and plausible deniability. In this sense the boardrooms and debating chambers are no different from the rap videos on BET. Race is, among other things, a performance.

Obama knows this only too well. In *The Audacity of Hope*, he recalls sitting in the Illinois Senate with a white Democratic legislator as they watched a black colleague (referred to as John Doe) deliver a speech on the racist implications of eliminating a certain program. "You know what the problem is with John?" the white senator asked him. "Whenever I hear him, he makes me feel more white." Obama reflected. "In defense of my black colleague, I pointed out that it's not always easy for a black politician to gauge the right tone to take—too angry? not angry enough?—when discussing the enormous hardships facing his or her constituents. Still, [his] comment was instructive. Rightly or wrongly, white guilt has largely exhausted itself in America."

Whether "white guilt" has ever truly been exercised, let alone exhausted, and what good it ever did anyone even if it has, are moot points. The fact of the matter is that a black politician who wants white support must first "gauge the right tone." In 1995, when it seemed as though Colin Powell might run for President, he explained his appeal to white voters thus: "I speak reasonably well, like a white person," and, visually, "I ain't that black."

In the past this would not have mattered. There was a time when Powell could have been as light-skinned as a latte and as eloquent as Shakespeare and still not be in the running. In 1958, 53 percent of voters said they would not vote for a black candidate for President; in 1984 it was 16 percent; by 2003 it was 6 percent. Herein lies one substantial fact that is remolding the nature of black politics and the opportunities for black politicians—white people have become a viable electoral constituency for black candidates. According to a *Washington Post*/ABC News poll early this year, a candidate's being over 72, a Mormon or twice divorced are all greater issues for voters than race.

There is, of course, the very real chance that they are lying.In the past white voters have told pollsters that they were happier about voting for black candidates than they actually were, leaving the vote for black candidates about five points less than predicted. This was once known as the Bradley effect, after the 1982 gubernatorial candidacy of black Democratic candidate Tom Bradley in California. Bradley was ahead in the polls until the very end but lost. Some white voters who said they would vote for Bradley changed their minds on election day. Seven years later it was renamed the Wilder effect, after Douglas Wilder

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By John Fleming

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narrowly scraped to victory as Virginia governor in what, according to polls, ought to have been a far more comfortable win.

But it seems unlikely that this time around there will be an "Obama effect." A report by the Pew Research Center, which matched the polls to the results for five black candidates in statewide races during the 2006 midterms, found that they were highly accurate. "Fewer people are making judgments about candidates based solely, or even mostly, on race itself," concluded the Pew report. This change in voting patterns enables black candidates to make substantial rather than symbolic runs for state or even national office and therefore lends different potential priorities to black political possibilities. But to be successful they have to nurture a different base and create a different coalition of interests than their predecessors did.

"The civil rights generation saw politics as the next step in the struggle for civil rights," explains Salim Muwakkil, senior editor of *In These Times*. "Their aim was to get their agenda taken up by whoever won. But this new generation do not conceive politics as the next step but just as what it is—politics. Their aim is to win." ■

What GWOT Has Wrought

On September 20, 2001, before a joint session of Congress, President George W. Bush declared, "Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there…. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." As it turned out, those fateful words ushered in not a concerted worldwide campaign against militant fundamentalism but a wave of repression felt around the globe. Instead of being a standard-bearer for human rights and civil liberties, the United States lowered the bar, creating secret prisons or "black sites," erecting Guantánamo, rationalizing torture and curtailing civil liberties at home. The US-fashioned "global war on terror" (GWOT) was then replicated in country after country, adapting to local circumstances to provide rhetorical refuge for tyrants and forsaking democratic principles. As the articles that follow show, the "war on terror" has been invoked to arrest and torture prodemocracy activists in Egypt, round up street vendors and protesters in El Salvador, rationalize politically motivated assassinations in the Philippines, jail bloggers and censor websites in Thailand and condone military dictatorship in Pakistan. The criminalization of dissent is not new to these places, and it does not always reflect US intervention or security interests. But the "war on terror" is a new paradigm, and it has proven remarkably versatile and severely damaging. While purporting to protect democracy against its enemies, the "war on terror" has become one of them.

—The Editors

Egypt

by NEGAR AZIMI

There's a story that when the news arrived that airplanes had flown into the World Trade Center, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak turned to one of his aides and said, "My job just got a little bit easier." Throughout the 1980s and '90s Egypt fought its own nasty, brutish "war on terror." As militant groups—Gama'a Islamiya and Islamic Jihad most prominent among them—orchestrated attacks on government officials, members of the country's Coptic minority and even foreign tourists, thousands of people were locked up incommunicado in crackdowns across the country. Most of the detained were tortured; others simply disappeared. At the height of the dirty war, some 30,000 suspected militants—or at least those unlucky enough to be regarded as such—had been whisked away to Egypt's famously inhospitable prisons. Enter 9/11 and the vaguely defined "war on terror" it inspired. Here was the perfect opportunity for Mubarak—by then a semibionic man entering his third decade of rule—to summon up his trusty narrative about fighting terror at all costs, especially in justifying his exceptional powers, not to mention his government's growing crackdowns on its own citizens.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RYAN INZANA

Suddenly the sort of arbitrary detention, trials on flimsy evidence, torture and trampling of freedom of expression and assembly that had long been de rigueur in Egypt found a home under the banner of a global war on terror. When the Americans were in need of an ally in executing their extraordinary-rendition program, Egypt handily stepped up to the plate—quickly becoming one of the favored recipients of the unlucky Abu Omars of the world. Mubarak, in the meantime, continued to cooperate with the United States on security issues and maintained Egypt's fraught diplomatic ties with Israel. The country was, in turn, ensured its sustained bounty of military aid ($1.3 billion for 2008 alone)—and a blind eye was cast on its dismal human rights record.

Today, Mubarak's squeeze on civil liberties seems only to be growing tighter. The country's very own Patriot Act, in the form of an "emergency law" (this is the sort of emergency that knows no end; Egyptians have lived under its aegis continuously since 1981), was renewed in 2006 despite Mubarak's repeated promises to do away with it. A series of thirty-four cumbersome constitutional amendments hastily pushed through in March 2006 further cut into civil liberties. Among them, Article 179 places unprecedented restrictions on the right to privacy and due process, and gives the government sanction to use exceptional courts in trying terrorism suspects. While Nabil Fahmy, Egypt's smooth-talking ambassador to the United States, has indicated that a new terrorism bill will "provide for the necessary checks and safeguards on the use

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The American Revolution did not occur only from 1775–83. It began when British colonists first questioned the intrusions of Great Britain into their economic progress and civil lives. It erupted into armed conflict in 1775, but it did not end with the peace treaty of 1783. The Americans had yet to craft a government that brought into being new ways for citizens to relate to their government and for government to relate to the nation.

Independence—Just a Start

In achieving freedom the colonists traded one set of problems for another. The young nation could not pay its debts, craft an effective foreign policy, or forestall armed tax revolt from its western settlements. European monarchies expected imminent collapse.

Instead, 55 men from 13 sovereign states gathered to create a constitution for establishing a national government. The debate raged, but in the end, owing to a pledge to add a list of guaranteed liberties, the United States Constitution became the supreme law of the land.

About Your Professor

Dr. Peter C. Mancall is a Professor of History and Anthropology at the University of Southern California and Director of the USC–Huntington Early Modern Studies Institute. He has received two teaching excellence awards at the University of Kansas and in 2004 was named a Gamma Sigma Alpha Professor of the Year by the University of Southern California.

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of executive power in fighting terrorism," the law is more than likely to be the same old emergency law in a new guise. Tellingly, the USA Patriot Act and Britain's Anti-Terrorism Law have been cited in Egyptian parliamentary discussions surrounding the bill. They have theirs, too—or so the logic ran.

When bombs went off in Egypt's stark Sinai Peninsula in 2004, 2005 and again in 2006, the state strained to frame the attacks as acts of foreign machination, even though most signs pointed to the operations being homegrown (Sinai's population has long been marginalized by the state, and the territory is thickly littered with gripes). In the bombings' wake, thousands have been arrested, and thus far three men have been sentenced to death for the 2004 bombings at the Red Sea resort town of Taba. Local human rights activists have pointed to questionable evidence, irregular trial proceedings and allegations of torture in eliciting "confessions" from the three. Even more recently, there have been indications that the state security forces may have gone as far as to fabricate incidents of terrorism to justify arrests. According to a new Human Rights Watch report, authorities have used trumped-up terrorism charges to clamp down on suspected Islamists, including resorting to arbitrary detention and torture to elicit false confessions in one 2006 case involving twenty-two detainees, referred to as the Victorious Sect.

And in recent months, the state has further turned up the heat on its enemies and civil society—particularly with the question of succession uncomfortably lingering (who will succeed the 79-year-old Mubarak?) and indications of growing opposition to Mubarak's rule. The Muslim Brotherhood has taken the lion's share of the pressure, with its highest-ranking leaders in and out of prison, while thirty-three members face trial in a military tribunal for membership in a banned organization and allegedly providing students with weapons and military training. Increasingly, the state has been monitoring the Brotherhood's financial doings. The state-run press frequently intimates that it is linked to international terrorist networks.

Torture continues to be rampant—of alleged Islamists, of democracy and labor activists, of bloggers and journalists. Authorities have shut down two NGOs in recent months, one that worked on torture cases and another on labor rights. The former, the Association for Human Rights Legal Aid, had been involved in the first-ever lawsuit against a state security officer for torture. And at least ten journalists have been sentenced for various publishing offenses in the past months. Egyptian civil society has plainly seen better times.

Where are Egypt's American patrons, who for one brief moment called for reform, having occasionally leveraged their power in pushing for modest, if not merely symbolic, political openings? In a 2005 interview with ABC News on the eve of the country's first multiparty presidential election, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced that Mubarak had "opened the door" to reform. But this past June, when George W. Bush voiced his concern for the fate of Ayman Nour, an opposition leader locked up on politically motivated charges, Egyptian foreign minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit accused the American leader of "unacceptable" meddling in his country's affairs. The token gesture had been made, and it was back to business as usual. A Congressional foreign aid bill that would withhold $200 million in US military funds for Egypt—based on its human rights abuses as well as its failure to monitor weapons-smuggling into Gaza effectively—has shown little momentum since it passed the House this past summer.

And then came the news, in late July, that the United States had engineered a ten-year, multibillion-dollar arms package for Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Israel and Egypt. Ostensibly designed to counter growing Iranian influence in the region, the generous deal was described by the Secretary of State as part of a "renewed commitment to the security of our key strategic partners in the region." It seemed that the business of the "global war on terror" and, by extension, of cultivating friendly autocratic regimes had once again trumped reform. Egypt's door, once showing signs of cracking open, had slammed firmly shut. Somewhere, Hosni Mubarak was smiling.

Negar Azimi is senior editor of Bidoun, *an arts and culture magazine based in New York City.*

El Salvador

by WES ENZINNA

In September 2006, after the Salvadoran Congress passed the Special Law Against Acts of Terrorism, then-US Ambassador H. Douglas Barclay congratulated the Salvadoran people. "The US and El Salvador are [now] partners in the war on terror," he beamed. The law, modeled on the USA Patriot Act, establishes a special terrorism tribunal and allows for anonymous witnesses and undercover agents to participate in those trials. It also criminalizes acts such as public protests, street blockades and "publicly justifying terrorism" with punishments of up to eighty years in prison. More than a year later, this law has turned scores of Salvadoran citizens into fugitives.

Last July, I spent two weeks in San Salvador chasing down one of these ersatz outlaws—Sandra Henriquez, a leader of the Salvadoran National Vendors Movement. On May 12 the National Civilian Police (PNC) raided vendors' stalls, including hers, in downtown San Salvador, attempting to confiscate the pirated goods they sell. The vendors resisted, and a group of angry onlookers—some say provocateurs—set fire to a police car. Shortly after, 150 riot police showed up and subdued the crowd with tear gas and rubber bullets.

Henriquez avoided arrest, but nineteen others were taken into police custody and charged under the antiterrorism law. At a press conference, President Elías Antonio Saca said, "[The vendors] are terrorists—the correct word is 'terrorist'.... Anyone who sells something illegal on the streets must go to prison."

On May 30 the government issued a blacklist of suspects accused of participating in the Vendors Movement and thus wanted on terrorism charges. Henriquez was in her home watching her 3-year-old son when she heard that her husband was on the list and had been arrested, along with several others, bringing the total to twenty-two in jail. "What I didn't know was that the government had made the order to capture me as well," she said. During the country's long civil war, govern-

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ment officials issued similar blacklists—the next day, many of those on the lists would be dead. "When I found out I was on the blacklist, I fled," Henriquez said.

The vendors were the first activists to be accused under the antiterrorism law, but they will not be the last. On July 2, protesters gathered in the town of Suchitoto to oppose President Saca's plan to "decentralize" the country's water systems, which many believe is the first step toward privatization. As government helicopters swirled in the sky, protesters blockaded the street, preventing Saca's caravan from entering the city. Riot police and PNC agents opened fire with tear gas and rubber bullets, and arrested thirteen people, including four leaders of the rural development organization CRIPDES, as well as journalist María Haydee Chicas. Thirteen of those arrested are being charged under the antiterrorism law.

María Silvia Guillén, executive director in El Salvador of the Foundation for Studies of Applied Law, believes the law is being used as a political weapon. It creates "wild cards that allow the concepts and penalties of the law to be invoked or left aside at any given time, influenced by any political motive," she says. Pedro Juan Hernández, a professor of economics at the University of El Salvador, concurs. "The objective of these antiterrorist laws isn't to fight terrorism, because there haven't been acts of terrorism [in El Salvador] in many years," he recently told *In These Times*.

The Bush and Saca administrations maintain close ties. El Salvador is the only Latin American country with troops still in Iraq and was the first to sign the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). The country receives $461 million over five years in US aid through the Millennium Challenge Corporation and is home to the controversial US-run International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in San Salvador.

Despite ample evidence of abuses, US officials have failed to condemn violations of civil liberties in El Salvador. "Whatever step a government takes against terrorism is an appropriate step," said Ambassador Barclay after El Salvador's antiterrorism law squeezed through Congress last year. He also made news when he urged the Salvadoran government to step up its use of wiretaps. Current US Ambassador Charles Glazer has remained silent on the issue and declined to go on record for this article.

US economic interests run deep in El Salvador. After the 1996 privatization of the country's electricity industry, corporations like North Carolina–based giant Duke Energy, once a business partner with Enron, swooped in to invest. If El Salvador's water infrastructure is privatized, analysts predict, a similar assault will follow; in May the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, an agency of the US government, held a conference in San Salvador focusing on "investment opportunities in sectors such as infrastructure [and] energy." CAFTA also streamlines the privatization process and prioritizes strengthening intellectual property laws and punishments, and the ILEA's founding charter establishes intellectual property rights as a prime concern. Elsewhere, the ILEA has said its mission is to "enhance the functioning of free markets." The vendors, however, say that repression has increased since CAFTA and the ILEA came to El Salvador.

Wilfredo Berrios, a labor leader in San Salvador, argues that the recent crackdown is designed to silence protest against Saca's economic policies and to protect the investment climate for foreign businesses. "The opposition to CAFTA and to water privatization has been very strong," Berrios says. "These policies can't go forward unless their opponents are silenced."

Opponents of the new law now include three judges from the San Salvador tribunals, who recently criticized the measure for being too vague. In August forty-one US Congress members sent a letter to President Saca expressing concern over the arrest of Suchitoto protesters. On September 1 the government dropped all charges against the vendors. But the thirteen people arrested in Suchitoto, including Haydee Chicas, still face terrorism charges and will stand trial in February. If convicted, they could face up to sixty years in prison.

While it has offered rhetorical support for the antiterrorism law, the Bush Administration remains cautious about more direct intervention. After all, US involvement in the country's affairs—like the massacre at El Mozote, where US-trained soldiers raped, tortured and executed 900 villagers in 1981—has caused diplomatic disasters in the past. But like Ambassadors Barclay and Glazer, Washington remains quietly supportive of repression in El Salvador, continuing to deepen and benefit from economic and military ties with the Saca administration.

If the United States has learned to be more hands-off in its relations with El Salvador, President Saca draws a very different lesson from history. In a May 7 speech, he offered an example for today's armed forces to emulate in the "war on terror": Col. Domingo Monterrosa, the commander who led the massacre at El Mozote. "Colonel Monterrosa," Saca said without irony, "knew how to defend the nation, with nobility, in the saddest moment of the Republic."

Wes Enzinna, a graduate student in Latin American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, is the winner of NACLA's 2007 Samuel Chavkin Investigative Journalism Award.

The Philippines

by LUIS H. FRANCIA

Politically motivated killings in the Philippines—the United States' former colony and staunchest ally in Asia—have swelled since 9/11. According to Karapatan, an umbrella group for various Philippine human rights organizations, close to 900 men and women have been summarily executed since Gloria Macapagal Arroyo took over in 2001 from disgraced President Joseph Estrada. Continuing to

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support Bush's "global war on terror," President Arroyo has ratcheted up her government's pressure on the Philippine left, reviving memories of the Marcos dictatorship and its dirty war against the opposition. Manila knows that as long as it supports the Bush Administration, thereby obtaining economic and military assistance from the United States, it can get away with murder—literally.

Human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights First have criticized the Arroyo government for failing to prevent—and even abetting—such killings. A report to the United Nations by Special Rapporteur Philip Alston, based on a fact-finding visit in February, echoes such criticism. Alston points to two underlying causes for the unchecked murders: the indiscriminate labeling of left-wing groups as "front organizations" for "armed groups whose aim is to destroy democracy" and a government "counter-insurgency strategy" that encourages "the extrajudicial killings of activists and other 'enemies' in certain circumstances." Even the 2006 government-appointed Melo Commission blamed rogue elements in the military for these murders.

Those assassinated include pastors, labor leaders, student activists, farmers, workers and journalists—at least thirty-two of the last have been killed for reasons directly related to their work, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, which ranks the Philippines as one of the most dangerous places for its profession. As veteran Manila columnist Luis Teodoro writes, "The killings are an integral part of the policy to dismantle whatever else remains of the democratic and populist legacies" brought about by the 1986 overthrow of the Marcos regime.

Last February the Philippine Congress passed the Human Security Act (HSA)—a virtual copy of the US Homeland Security Act—and many expect even more human rights abuses in its wake. By broadening the government's arrest and detention powers, the law seriously undermines civil liberties. With its vague definition of what constitutes terrorism, HSA criminalizes dissent; thus, burning an effigy could be seen as a terrorist act.

Last August, in one of the first instances of the law's application, three visiting women's rights activists who are members of the US-based Gabriela Network (an affiliate of Gabriela Philippines, the nation's largest militant feminist group) were initially prevented from leaving Manila: Annaliza Enrile, a US citizen and professor at the University of Southern California; Judy Mirkinson, also a US citizen; and novelist Ninotchka Rosca, a US permanent resident. Having attended the tenth Women's International Solidarity Affair in the Philippines, the three found themselves on a government watch list because of suspected ties to the Taliban.

Liza Maza, Gabriela's elected representative to the Philippine Congress, calls the charge "utterly preposterous," given Gabriela's politics and the Taliban's medieval, misogynistic bent. Rosca, a political detainee under Marcos, describes such tactics as part of a larger strategy by President Arroyo, whose 2004 reelection was tainted by charges of cheating, to "crush…the left and other advocates of dissent before 2010, which is when her term ends." According to Rosca, Arroyo intends to "push through a constitutional amendment…to enable her to remain in office." In what was perhaps a dry run, Arroyo declared a monthlong state of emergency in early 2006. Arroyo might also be turning a blind eye to the military's excesses to ensure its loyalty, which is tenuous—as demonstrated by a failed coup in late November.

Not coincidentally, this dirty war was revived shortly before US Special Operations Forces landed in Mindanao in January 2002—the first time American troops have been in the Philippines since US bases were shut down in 1992. Even though the Philippine Constitution forbids the basing of foreign troops on native soil, the US military has kept between 100 and 500 personnel in the Philippines for the past five years. Their presence is justified under the bilateral 1998 Visiting Forces Agreement, which allows for joint military exercises and permits the US military to advise and train Filipino troops. The arrangement is supposed to be provisional, but neither government has set an end date.

According to Focus on the Global South, a Bangkok-based think tank that monitors US military activities, US soldiers have been more active than their technical roles allow. They've been photographed, by Agence France-Presse and Reuters, accompanying Philippine troops in their hunt for the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), alleged to have ties with the Southeast Asian terrorist organization Jemaah Islamiyah. Lee McClenny, US Embassy spokesman in Manila, states that the troops "are not involved in any combat roles but will fire back if fired upon.… Our role is to advise and assist the Philippine military."

Oddly, Philippine military units vastly outnumber the ASG, a small, violent and essentially criminal gang. Besides, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) knows the terrain much better than its US counterparts, having battled the Maoist New People's Army, the Moro National Liberation Front and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front for decades without any US advisers on hand. The command structure, however, is corrupt and plagued by persistent accusations that the ASG has paid off higher-ups in the past. It isn't tactical intelligence or foreign advisers that the AFP needs but sweeping reforms.

Equally disturbing, the United States is building installations for its troops, recently awarding a $14.4 million contract to Global Contingency Services of Irving, Texas, to construct these "temporary" structures. In the context of Philippine-US relations, "temporary" is a word fraught with irony. In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, the US naval fleet steamed into Manila Bay, ostensibly to aid the Filipinos in their revolution against Spain. Instead, the brutal 1899 Philippine-American War ensued when it became clear that the bluecoats were taking over the archipelago. Except for a brief hiatus in the 1990s, they have never left.

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Pakistan

by SHAHAN MUFTI

This past summer, as Pakistan's military ruler Pervez Musharraf stood, swords crossed with the band of his eclectic opposition, an audiotaped message from Osama bin Laden surfaced. "Musharraf's insistence on continuing his loyalty, submissiveness and aid to America," declared the voice, "makes armed rebellion against him and removing him obligatory."

The timing of the message left little doubt that the leader of Al Qaeda aimed to capitalize on the unrest caused by the country's freewheeling street movement—even attempting to grab its reins. But it was a futile attempt. Sure, the movement of lawyers, students, human rights activists and journalists demanded an end to military rule, but it was not interested in bin Laden's utopia; it was mobilized to empower the country's assertive judiciary, which was enacting fundamental democratic reform and tipping the balance of power in favor of civilian forces for the first time in Pakistan's history.

But how was it that the leader of Al Qaeda was in a position to contemplate an alliance with a movement built around the demands for judicial independence and stronger institutional checks and balances? This was never part of the "global war on terror" program. Terrorism was to be countered by democracy: "Freedom and the development of democratic institutions," the National Security Strategy of 2002 stated, are America's weapons in eradicating terrorism and oppression from the globe.

Unfortunately, Washington never seemed interested in applying its rhetoric to Pakistan. Had it really ensured the growth over the past six years of solid democratic institutions in the world's second-largest Muslim country, there might have been little reason to draw up plans for doomsday scenarios to secure the country's nuclear installations in case one army officer fell from power. Instead, Washington has maintained its alliance with the increasingly unpopular ruler and pumped billions of dollars of aid into an imperious military (it is also America's third-largest client of military hardware), thereby weakening all other institutions of the state and fueling unrest in the country. In doing so, Imran Khan, a leader popular among the growing urban middle classes, warned recently, "Americans are pushing people who are in favour of democracy…towards extremism."

The "war on terror" landed next door in Afghanistan in 2001, and in Pakistan it produced all the wrong results. In the general elections in 2002, widely accepted as rigged by Pakistan's intelligence agencies to ensure General Musharraf's political survival, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, or United Action Front, a coalition of Islamist parties (some conservative and militant), swept the entire west of the country, forming governments in two of Pakistan's four provinces. It was an unprecedented advance in a country where religious parties had never managed to win more than a tiny fraction of the popular vote. Militancy has only grown since. America's failure in Afghanistan has steadily boiled over into Pakistan through a 1,600-mile porous western border. Today, a war rages between self-styled Pakistani Taliban and the army a few hours north of the capital, in the once-majestic tourist resort of Swat. In 2007 alone there have been more than forty suicide attacks all over Pakistan, most aimed at military forces, compared with none six years ago.

Washington is trying to conjure up an alliance between the increasingly unpopular and erratic former general and a widely discredited Benazir Bhutto, who is being tried in international courts for stealing hundreds of millions of dollars from Pakistanis during her two tenures as prime minister. Washington appears to believe that these "moderates"—not the urban masses pleading for the rule of law—form America's best line of defense in a fight against the guerrilla militancy that is feeding off popular discontent. The approach is convenient "strategic policy"—just as supporting the mujahedeen once was, in another war at another time in the same place. America's policy-makers have always been more inclined to deal with all-powerful generals and intelligence agencies than with the people and their representatives in Pakistan. Strategic policy has consistently taken precedence over respect for the country's democratic institutions.

Pakistan was carved out of British India in 1947 and appeared on the map as the largest Muslim country in the world. But in contrast to some other colonial Muslim states, it was not generals or warlords but lawyers, politicians, students and activists who led a bare-knuckled movement against British rule, which would in turn lay the foundations of a constitutional republic.

Though the civil-military power balance in the country has always been stacked against civil democratic forces, thanks in part to heavy American aid that has poured in during times of army rule, democratic institutions remain ingrained in the state. So fundamental are they that the five times the military has taken over, it has depended on the country's courts to grant it popular legitimacy. It was a reversal of this compliant policy by the Supreme Court this year that led to Musharraf's coup against the judiciary.

The attack on the judiciary has reawakened the country's educated and growing but historically depoliticized middle classes, who have poured out onto the streets. Dressed in black suits and ties, the Pakistani lawyers fighting for reinstatement of sacked judges chant, "We made Pakistan! We'll save Pakistan!" They seem supremely confident of their country's ability to restore its sixty-year-old democratic promise.

Sadly, the movement battles American policy in the "war on terror," which seems (at best) to make little effort to support them. They are being jailed by the thousands by a US-supported ruler. Some old-guard politicians—former prime ministers Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif and even major Islamist leaders—are still tempted to throw their chips in with the military establishment.

The movement is not blindly pro-American, but its members are most definitely not sympathetic to the vision of the Taliban, who have made steady inroads during Musharraf's

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rule. Torn between embattled extremes, they see an opportunity to finally reconcile the state's secular democratic foundation and Muslim national identity. But faced with continued ambivalence from major political players inside the country and the international community, they could simply disappear. That would be a shame, for they could be America's most natural and potent allies in this dismal war.

Shahan Mufti, a freelance writer based in Islamabad, is a correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor.

Thailand

by NOY THRUPKAEW

More than a year after tanks trundled through downtown Bangkok, it looks like the generals intend to stay. The military deposed democratically elected Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on September 19, 2006, and promised a slew of changes—economic reforms, a crackdown on corruption and a resolution to the insurgency in the predominantly Muslim southern provinces. For this, and for a change of pace from the corporate strongman tactics of Thaksin, the crowds came out in droves, offering food and flowers, and mugging for photos next to soldiers and their tanks.

The honeymoon is over, though. The economy is stagnant, the insurgency continues and the military is becoming more deeply entrenched every day ahead of national elections on December 23. Not content with expanding their budget from 86 billion baht before the coup to 143 billion now, the generals have issued a spate of bills targeting free speech and the right to assembly, including cybercrime and film censorship. Most troubling, the military produced a draft of an Internal Security Act (ISA) that would allow it to command government officials "not to perform any act or to perform any act" that would affect internal security. Human Rights Watch has criticized this provision as a blank check that could be used to overrule existing laws and human rights protections. The executors of ISA could also act as criminal investigators and sentence those deemed a threat to national security to "re-education camps" for up to six months. They can order curfews, prohibit demonstrations and public gatherings should they give rise to "public disorder" and suspend or alter communications and transportation systems. The military- and law-enforcement-based Internal Security Operation Command (ISOC), charged with overseeing the act, could seize state agencies and would be exempt from prosecution under the Administrative Court, the highest court to oversee human rights violations.

ISA is well on its way to becoming law. It passed its first reading by the National Legislative Assembly and awaits a committee review and a final vote—a process that the government seems keen to fast-track ahead of the December elections.

The alleged motivation behind ISA? National security—and terrorism. "This law could help us prevent any future acts of terrorism," said a senior official in the coup government's Council on National Security, who spoke on condition of anonymity. As he envisioned it, the law could also help update outmoded security systems, deal with drugs and arms trading on the borders and with ongoing violence in the south. But the law's critics, including more than 100 academics who signed a petition protesting ISA, see it as old-fashioned Thai military control dressed up in the rhetoric of security and counterterrorism. They worry that ISA could be used to suppress dissent.

At a meeting with anti-ISA signatories, government officials stated that the draft bill is inspired by the US Homeland Security and Patriot acts. That Thailand would follow in US footsteps is not surprising, considering that the countries are economic and strategic allies—close enough for Thailand to become home to a US "black site," a covert prison that was closed down in 2003 after its existence became public.

According to analysis by the International Consortium of Jurists, ISA draws on the emergency decree that Thaksin declared for the southern border provinces in 2005, martial law and the ISOC structure set up by Thailand's old anti-communist act, which was in effect from 1952 to 1979. The ISA, however, would transcend the time and area limitations of the emergency decree and martial law and expand the powers of ISOC. As Naruemon Thabchumphon, an academic who circulated the petition against the act, said, "If passed, this law will give the military unlimited time and area to expand their security system. The whole kingdom of Thailand will be under a permanent state of emergency."

The new cybercrime law also contains language about terrorism and national security—and was recently used in the secret arrest of two bloggers for their outspoken remarks about the much revered monarchy. The bloggers were eventually released without being charged but retain criminal records and could be charged with cybercrime violations up to ten years in the future. In addition, more than 50,000 websites, many including content critical of the coup generals, are blocked by the government, and individual Internet service providers, who view the cybercrime law as allowing them free rein to censor, block even more sites.

One of the most ambitious pieces of recent proposed legislation, ISA would grant the ISOC "enormous power in terms of controlling political activities," according to Panitan Wattanayagorn, a Chulalongkorn University security specialist and a foreign affairs adviser to the coup's Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont. "The ISOC can bypass normal due process. That's not unusual even in democratic Western countries—President Bush has it. But the problem with us is that we need elected officials who can vote on that policy—and it must be subjected to checks and balances in executive and parliamentary system."

Even if the act faces an elected Parliament, it may pull through anyway, thanks to the military's increased financial

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muscle and strategic jockeying. In response to public feedback, ISA will appoint the prime minister as commander of the ISOC and position the army head as ISOC deputy commander, instead of its head, as stipulated in the original ISA draft. But in a country where coup generals are beginning to resign from the military to assume top-level positions in the interim civilian government, critics are not hopeful that ISA will protect civil liberties—or be implemented by a commander who will.

To its critics, ISA is just the latest manifestation of growing authoritarianism in Thailand. "We're living under a coercive democracy," says Surachart Bamrungsuk, a political science professor at Chulalongkorn University. "This is just the latest sign that we are living in a dark age."

Noy Thrupkaew, a writer based in Thailand, is a senior correspondent at The American Prospect.

Waiting for Godot In a Wasteland

by BILLY SOTHERN

> *But isn't this play rather pessimistic, I've been asked. Meaning, wasn't it depressing for an audience in Sarajevo; meaning, wasn't it pretentious or insensitive to stage* Godot *there?… The condescending, philistine question makes me realize that those who ask it don't understand at all what it's like in Sarajevo now, any more than they really care about literature and theatre.*
>
> *—Susan Sontag, "Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo"*

Signs on corrugated plastic—A Country Road/A Tree/Evening—had been fixed to wooden telephone polls all over town with roofing nails and zip ties. Who knew what the hell they meant, or even noticed them next to the Clarkson for City Council, Roof Repair and other political and commercial signs that litter our neutral grounds and cityscape in postdiluvial New Orleans? But as it turns out, those first signs, looking every bit as much the disposable junk as the others, were genuine contemporary art, made by Paul Chan, a New York art star. They gave notice to the city, however obliquely, using the opening stage directions of the play—Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*—that he was to stage on two consecutive weekends in two of the most devastated neighborhoods in America.

The ambiguity of the signs did not inhibit a packed house for each of the five nights the play was performed for free in New Orleans. Indeed, it was only planned for four nights—two in the Lower Ninth Ward and two in Gentilly. But Chan, the Classical Theater of Harlem—which staged the play here and in New York—and Creative Time, a New York nonprofit dedicated to public art, which produced and funded the visionary endeavor, added a fifth night after turning back hundreds of people from the performances in the abandoned Lower Ninth Ward.

After the lucky few hundred folks who made it in the first night ate gumbo and were then drawn to bleachers a couple of blocks away by a brass band and dancers from The Big Nine

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DONN YOUNG, COURTESY CREATIVE TIME

Social Aid and Pleasure Club, a de rigueur homage to the city's vernacular culture, people took their seats. The stage, an abandoned intersection, was in the midst of several wasted city blocks where aggressive local flora had begun reclaiming the neighborhood as a backswamp, now that bulldozers had cleared most of the homes destroyed following Hurricane Katrina. The play was framed in the distance, like the curtain at the back of a stage, against a newly built concrete flood wall, whose earlier incarnations—in 2005 during Katrina and in 1965 during Hurricane Betsy—had failed to keep the water at bay.

The Rev. Charles Duplessis introduced the premiere and invoked the lost lives specific to this "charming spot" on "this bitch of an earth," as Beckett's characters later said. "Where you are sitting is where someone's home was.… People lost their lives right in this area," Duplessis explained with great solemnity, clearing the air momentarily of the joyful music that still rang in our ears.

And then the familiar, repetitive, morally ambiguous play began. Two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, talking, waiting for Godot, trying to pass the time, despairing. Pozzo and Lucky appearing, then disappearing. The boy coming to tell the tramps that Godot would not be coming today, "but surely tomorrow." Roughly the same thing occurring in the second act.

The play is dark, written after the world spiraled into uncontrolled horror and barbarity by an Irishman who saw it

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up close. But it is also a comedy in the modern sense—funny like slapstick.

Wendell Pierce, a Gentilly native and TV star from HBO's *The Wire*, played Vladimir, admirably emphasizing the vaudevillian elements of the play and riffing on Louis Armstrong, another native son, and "Li'l Liza Jane," an important song in the New Orleans jazz repertory. T. Ryder Smith was arresting as brutal Pozzo. Everything else, from the other actors to dynamic staging to the bare sets in the morally charged landscapes, worked well. But ultimately, it was the audience—residents of the surrounding neighborhoods, people from across a city whose every block was marked by the storm—that night after night made this performance great because of their special sensitivity to "tragicomedy," the designation Beckett gave the play.

While certainly not only in New Orleans, it is clear that especially in New Orleans we are able to understand and embrace life's absurdity, how we all wait for good or bad, how terribly uncertain our futures are, but then we are immediately able to belly-laugh at Estragon's stinking feet or Pozzo's sudden blindness or, worst of all, the tramps' horror at having to wait another day and their contemplation of suicide while Estragon's pants sit at his ankles.

The audiences in the Lower Ninth Ward and Gentilly, like the audience in Sarajevo during the siege of that city, or the audience at San Quentin prison, where this play was staged in 1957, or most any other audience, I expect, did not laugh at these misfortunes with any derision or condescension but with empathy. Here in New Orleans, though, our identification with the humor in the play was slightly sharper, arising not just from the storm and its bitter aftermath but from more than a century of local culture built around the proposition that you need to laugh, sing, eat—find joy wherever you can—to keep from crying.

And like the characters of the play, we are too aware of our folly. We ask ourselves why we do the things we do. Primarily, why do we live here? Our friends and neighbors were left to die in the storm's rising water. Now they are being murdered at alarming rates in our streets. Even now, more than two years after the storm, many more things are worse than are better. And given the lack of political vision in the present, the horrors of the past—the flood, the despair, the poverty—will no doubt persist or repeat themselves.

But unlike any other city in America, those of us who are here now have chosen to be here. We were forced to leave, and we returned. And we stand at a barren crossroads, beside dark oaks and magnolias, at the twilight of the life of our city, and we rebuild our shotgun homes, our double galleries and our slab tract houses in Gentilly, New Orleans East, Central City, Lakeview and the Lower Ninth Ward. We wait for leadership and genuine assistance to keep us from flooding again, to give meaning to the promises that we relied upon. But we no longer expect it to come, and we know that our work may all come undone. It likely will. But, like Vladimir and Estragon, we will keep coming back. Because this is what we do. This is who we are. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

Sax Machine

S. Yarmouth, Mass.

Brian Morton, in "Roscoe Mitchell's Wolf Tones" [Dec. 3], has it all wrong about wolf tones. I've been involved in teaching instruments to young students for more than fifty years—oboe, flute, clarinet, sax, trumpet, French horn (I've also played jazz for more than sixty years)—and the wolf tone has never been a factor in any of them if they were reasonably well made. Wolf tones are limited almost exclusively to bowed strings. The alto sax is the easiest instrument for a beginner, and my students had decent sounds within six or eight weeks if they practiced. To write that the "saxophone has nothing but" wolf tones shows a complete lack of knowledge about the acoustics of musical instruments.

As for Morton's critique of Mitchell's music, it doesn't sound to me that it is jazz at all but rather jazz-influenced the same way folk music influenced Brahms, Dvorák and Bartók. Mitchell may be quite creative, but as Duke Ellington once said, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing."

Paul Nossiter

Morton Replies

London

Paul Nossiter's response to my article on Roscoe Mitchell is right and misses the point. He is strictly correct in saying that wolf tones are associated with the string instruments. The point I was trying to make—stretched, I admit—is that the saxophone is unusually "dead" as an instrument until invested with the unique personality of the player. It is also an instrument that has to be wrestled into conformity in a way that most of the canonical instruments Nossiter teaches do not.

I have played alto and soprano saxophones—both excellent instruments—for thirty-five years and have no difficulty indicating the places where intonation requires adjustments. I should perhaps have cited the authority of British virtuoso John Harle, still best known for his solo part in Sir Harrison Birtwistle's "Panic at the London Proms," in describing the saxophone as an intractable beast; he also used the "wolf note" analogy.

I rather suspect that Nossiter's strictures are aimed as much at Mitchell as at my musicological vagaries. Mitchell is, as I was at pains to explain, a player and composer who sits somewhat apart from the mainstream of jazz, swing and bebop but who manages to combine a high level of abstraction and complexity with a pungent and, yes, swinging approach to the vernacular, particularly the blues. Those published "authorities" who suggest Mitchell has no foundation in blues form tend to be, not surprisingly, those who argue that Charlie Parker and Miles Davis were not bluesmen either.

I congratulate Nossiter on his success with his students. Progress in six to eight weeks? Approximately every six to eight weeks I vow to retire, or to take up contrabass sarrusophone or ukulele or some other instrument for which the role models are not so fearsomely accomplished. Geography probably dictates that we will never have a chance to jam, but if circumstance permits…

Brian Morton

CORRECTION

Due to an editing error two titles were rendered incorrectly in Christopher Hayes's "Ron Paul's Roots" [Dec. 24]. Brink Lindsey is vice president for research at the Cato Institute, and Justin Raimondo is editorial director of Antiwar.com.

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Books & the Arts.

Tilted Ash

by ARTHUR C. DANTO

COURTESY RICHARD BARNES/MOMA

Installation view of MoMA's Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium with Martin Puryear's sculptures

When the new MoMA building opened in 2004, one of its many peculiar features was a sixty-foot-tall atrium space rising from its second floor. It was thought of as an "indoor sculpture garden," but it really served two functions: to be a piazza where those who survived the ticket lines could gather and gab, and to be a display space for some of MoMA's largest pieces, including Barnett Newman's *Broken Obelisk* and, against its east wall, one of Monet's *Water Lilies* paintings. The space was designed so that visitors could look down on these works at sharper and sharper angles from each of the five gallery levels and, vertiginously, from an opening in the floor of the sixth level—a grand view to a space disposed only to demoralize whatever art was placed there.

At the new building's opening, the atrium's height—a mere eight inches lower than the Sistine Chapel—famously reduced Monet's canvas to a shriveled painted rag. Since then, the atrium has given temporary residence to works by various artists that, while strong enough to hold the wall in most other spaces, are here somehow dwarfed by the weight of all that emptiness above them. One cannot but recall the dread with which the thought of infinite spaces filled Blaise Pascal. Quite the most exciting feature of the current MoMA retrospective exhibition of American sculptor Martin Puryear (on view through January 14) is the way he has used the unprecedented opportunity of having the entire atrium to himself to infuse bare height with meaningfulness and to turn this shaft of hostile emptiness into something aesthetically breathtaking.

The bulk of the show consists of about fifty works, from the mid-1970s to the present, artfully distributed to give each piece the room it needs. The main components of the atrium installation are built to a scale substantially larger than Puryear's typical pieces and in a way that does not diminish but rather glorifies their virtues—craft, beauty, intelligence, invention, wit, depth, meaning and a spirit of lightness. Much of what Puryear made before the '70s was destroyed in a studio fire, and everything he has made since fuses an unmistakably modernist vision with anthropological references to what one might call the aesthetics of everyday life in black Africa. Puryear, an African-American, spent time in the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone in the '60s. His materials, in the works on the sixth floor and in the atrium, are characteristically wood and fiber; but more than that, he makes a sophisticated use of what Claude Lévi-Strauss calls bricolage ("improvisation") in his masterpiece, *La Pensée sauvage*. Like Robinson Crusoe, Puryear appropriates whatever objects come to hand.

The whole second floor of MoMA, including the atrium, was planned for and built in a misled effort to anticipate the future history of modern art, which MoMA's curators believed was bent on the creation of ever larger works. That view was widely shared, though it has not exactly been borne out in the radical pluralism of twenty-first-century art, which comes in all sizes, including no size at all. It was also the justification for converting a complex of vacated factory buildings in North Adams, Massachusetts, into the huge gallery spaces of MASS MoCA, which had the benign consequence of turning a decaying mill town into the home of "America's largest contemporary art center" (as the museum's website puts it) in 1999. It had been the vision of curator Thomas Krens too, and it earned him the directorship of the Guggenheim Foundation in New York, which he has held since 1988. Krens found even greater success with essentially the same vision in Bilbao, where, with help from architect Frank Gehry, he transformed the drab industrial Basque city into a site of global aesthetic pilgrimage. Guggenheim Bilbao came equipped with an interior as capacious as a hangar and fulfilled

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its destiny with an exhibition of Richard Serra's *Torqued Ellipses* in 2005—"Surely one of the most wonderful exhibitions of [Serra's] work," according to MoMA curator Kynaston McShine. So electrifying was Krens's formula that I once heard a poignant lecture by an Ecuadorean curator asking whether a "Bilbao effect" was possible for Quito. The difference between the Guggenheim Bilbao and New York's Museum of Modern Art is not just the difference between New York and Bilbao, however. It is that Bilbao has no collection to speak of, whereas MoMA's collection has been traditionally committed to a philosophy of art history that presupposes an evolving canon, and hence an obligation that its architecture be able to hold the gigantesque works that the unfolding spirit of modernism was believed to promise.

In terms of MoMA's collection, this more or less meant Richard Serra. The augmented galleries of the second floor seemed to have been created just for him. During his recent retrospective at the museum, three of his giant, multi-ton sculptures were raised to the second floor, which had been massively reinforced to keep them from crashing through. And yet no one asked what the aesthetic payoff was of lifting them from ground level—which seems, in Aristotelian terms, to be their natural entelechy—and transporting them one story up, in defiance of gravity, to the second-floor spaces surrounding the atrium. (They weren't put in the atrium. Even Serra's *Band* and *Sequence* would have been stunted by the immensity of the space, though in fairness, there are works of his that might have risen to the occasion.)

The result of the second-floor installation was a feeling of claustrophobia. "The space has no side entrances or exits," Serra said in an interview. "If you want to experience the entire installation you have to walk the length of the space and back, but there is no prescribed way of seeing those pieces." They all but touched the ceiling. Here is how Serra conceived the installation:

> I decided to work out a coherent installation that would be representative of the body of work I'd done in the past seven or eight years. To bring that work together in one place would enable anyone going there to understand its evolution. Without knowing anything about sculpture you understand that the single and double ellipse, the spirals and the piece made up of torus and sphere sections share a language and a syntax. You become the reader of that language in your bodily movement. You can go anywhere you want, but... you are within the volume not only of the encapsulating architecture but of the field that unfolds as sculpture. The entire field becomes one of sculpture as you're spun into and out of the different pieces.

Critics celebrated the shift from the visual to the bodily in experiencing Serra's art, but what in fact was dramatic was the way he incorporated the compressed space of those galleries into his work, making space and sculpture a seamless totality. Now Puryear has achieved the same effect in the atrium, joining the architecture of the room with the objects within it.

There are three main pieces in Puryear's installation, two of which particularly account for its success. One of them, nobly titled *Ad Astra* (2006) and made for this exhibition, consists of a sixty-three-foot-long sapling held in a base on caisson wheels. Exceeding the atrium's height, the sapling is tilted, augmenting the impression that the ceiling is too low to hold it. The other vertical piece is *Ladder for Booker T. Washington* (1996), a thirty-five-foot ladder hung high against the west wall, so that its bottom rung is about ten feet above the floor. In contrast with Serra's installation, meant to force upon the viewer a heightened bodily consciousness, here the body—stationary, gazing upward—is only involved in terms of scale. When I saw the show, the upper part of the atrium was in shadow, which engulfed the top parts of the ladder and the sapling, making it difficult to determine, by eyesight alone, whether the latter's length has been added to or not. (It has.)

Ladder for Booker T. Washington, on loan from the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, is one of Puryear's iconic pieces. The bottom rung is about two feet wide, while the top is, at most, a few inches wide. There are about a hundred rungs in all, set at roughly graduated intervals and designed to create the illusion of a vanishing point at the top. There is something organic about the work, an effect enhanced by the fact that the ladder's uprights are wavy lengths of a single split ash trunk. It wiggles upward, like a runged serpent, against the wall. There is also something vaguely ghostly about the ladder as a whole, which seems to have been bleached or given a coat of whitish paint. Ladders are, of course, natural metaphors for human or spiritual ascent—or in the case of Booker T. Washington, of the ascent of African-Americans in society—step by step up narrower and narrower rungs. Puryear's piece is like an abstract biography of Washington—whose journey, as described in his actual biography, grew more and more difficult—made vivid by the imagined ordeal of placing a foot on rungs that grow ever tinier and more precarious as one approaches the top. Suspended as it is from high on the wall, the ladder suggests how difficult it would be to put a foot on even the lowest rung.

Ad Astra plays a similar game; in its case, the irony is located in its heroic Latin title. The two pieces together express desire and hope. David Levi Strauss, a *Brooklyn Rail* editor, suggested in conversation with Puryear that the caisson gives *Ad Astra* a military aura, indicating that its role is to carry artillery shells. But for me, it brought to mind a phrase from a book by the physicist Erwin Schrödinger, *What Is Life?*—a question he answers by saying, somewhat cryptically, that life is an aperiodic crystal. In fact, the base has just that form—its facets have different shapes, though they are composed of beautifully joined lengths of wood, screwed together with the authority of a master carpenter. That made it difficult for me to think of *Ad Astra* as associated with field artillery. Its wheels, in any case, are like those from the wagons of the Franco-Prussian War. But Puryear's works do not dictate meaning; his titles, rarely as specific as *Ladder*, merely prompt the imagination. For me, *Ad Astra* is not so much a military installation as either a crude movable monument to life, wheeled into ceremonies by a tribe that practices phallus worship, or a push toy for a baby giant.

It is more than monumental—it is a monument. It reaches for the stars, expresses desire and—formalistically speaking—collaborates with *Ladder* to measure the height of the atrium, subduing the architectural oppressiveness of space upon art. The idea of a movable monument is also supported by a marvelous piece in the main exhibition called *C.F.A.O.* (2006–7), which consists of a cast of a giant African mask placed in an arbor fashioned from kindling perched, perilously, in or on an old-fashioned wooden wheelbarrow. *C.F.A.O.*, which takes its name from the initials of a French trading company in Africa (Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale), could be a protest against the appropriation of cultural properties that also has the last laugh. At least moving what looks like an immense African mask on a primitive French wheelbarrow strikes me as pretty funny.

The title of the remaining large atrium sculpture is *Desire* (1981), licensing the thought that the three pieces are, in the aggregate, a tribute to yearning. A gift from Count Panza di Biumo, whose collection of Minimalist art is widely acknowledged as unparalleled, *Desire* was installed until re-

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cently in an eighteenth-century villa in the Italian province of Varese. Measuring thirty-two feet across, it consists of a single wheel of much larger circumference than those in *Ad Astra*, joined to an inverted conical basketlike object with a long horizontal pole. Weaving and basketry are signature Puryear features, perhaps inspired by the tools used by the people Puryear lived with in Sierra Leone—nets, cages, coops and traps. (On the back wall of the atrium hangs a work from the mid-'70s, when Puryear's art took on the look of African tools and utensils, called *Some Tales* [1975–78]: yellow pine, ash and hickory carved into a long saw blade and what look like curvy sticks.) *Desire* has the appearance of one of those primitive grinding devices in which an ox or a horse is tied to a pole and walks in a circle around a rotating upright. What the object of desire might be is not obvious. Perhaps the wheel makes it easier for a person to apply energy to the device—not as easy as an ox would make it! But that is just an uninspired guess. The word "desire," like the titles *Ad Astra* and *Ladder for Booker T. Washington*, slows the viewer down, causing us to play with plausible theories of any given work.

The allusions throughout this great show are too numerous, too arch, too knowing and too smart for me to spoil the fun. Once in a while, an artist appears whose work has high meaning and great craft but, most important, embodies what Kant, in the dense, sparse pages in which he advances his theory of art, called Spirit. "We say of certain products of which we expect that they should at least in part appear as beautiful art, they are without spirit, though we find nothing to blame in them on the score of taste," Kant wrote. I'd like to revive the term for critical discourse. Not a single piece here is without spirit, which is in part what makes this exhibition almost uniquely exhilarating. ■

COURTESY OF THE NEW REPUBLIC

Walter Lippmann in the offices of *The New Republic*, 1915

Lippmann and the News

by MICHAEL SCHUDSON

The "present crisis of western democracy," the 30-year-old Walter Lippmann announced in 1920, "is a crisis in journalism." A co-founder of *The New Republic* in 1914, a Wilson Administration confidant and Army captain with responsibility for propaganda in Europe during World War I, Lippmann spoke with authority. And originality. His view of the crisis was an unhappy one because, as he went on to argue in *Liberty and the News*, which was recently reissued as a slim and attractive paperback, journalism could never—unaided—provide an accurate account of reality for purposes of democratic self-government. But whereas other critics of wartime news coverage sought a journalism not beholden to advertisers or governments, Lippmann saw the core of journalism's corruption elsewhere—in its own smug assurance of knowledge and its eagerness to assert opinion rather than provide facts. Even so, Lippmann offered suggestions for what editors and reporters could do better. He urged them to commit themselves to the cardinal virtue of "truthful reporting" and recognize that opinionmongering, or what polite society might call "edification," cannot become a "higher law than truth." In fact, he wrote, "There can be no higher law in journalism than to tell the truth and shame the devil."

Liberty and the News
By Walter Lippmann.
Princeton. 92 pp. Paper $16.95.

The "crisis" Lippmann detected in both democracy and journalism arises because the sheer volume of political affairs in an interconnected national and global world—the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand in the capital of a small Slavic country, after all, had drawn American farmboys into a world war—surpasses the capacity of even the most conscientious citizens to monitor. "I know of no man, even among those who devote all of their time to watching public affairs, who can even pretend to keep track, at the same time, of his city government, his state government, Congress, the departments, the industrial situation, and the rest of the world," he wrote. We depend on the press in our attempts to make sense of politics—and we are vulnerable to its weaknesses: "If I lie in a lawsuit involving the fate of my neighbor's cow, I can go to jail. But if I lie to a million readers in a matter involving war and peace, I can lie my head off, and, if I choose the right series of lies, be entirely irresponsible."

For Lippmann, veracity is not easy to attain, nor is its enemy in journalism primarily or necessarily a matter of government pressure or corporate ownership. The same year he published *Liberty and the News*, Lippmann, assisted by fellow *New Republic* editor Charles Merz, published a forty-two-page supplement to the August 4 issue of *The New Republic* called "A Test of the News," which dissected the *New York Times*'s coverage of the Russian Revolution. Lippmann and Merz concluded that the coverage was vastly distorted, most of all by the hopes and fears of reporters and editors themselves, who saw in the Bolsheviks what they wanted to see. The *Times* assured readers on ninety-one occasions that the revolutionary regime was near collapse.

Who is to know what is and what is not a lie, Lippmann asks in *Liberty and the News*, "where all news comes at second-hand, where all the testimony is uncertain, men cease to respond to truths, and respond simply to opinions. The environment in which they act is not the realities themselves, but the pseudo-environment of reports, rumors, and guesses." In *Liberty and the News*, this is a telling observation; in *Public Opinion*, two years later, it is a treatise—still unsurpassed. The book that made "stereotype" part of everyday usage, *Public Opinion* demonstrated how much people—all people—see what they want to see and hear what they want to hear, and act in the world based on "the pictures in our heads." When these pictures come from distant places, brought to us by a

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press without much self-discipline or sophistication or intellectual weight, our actions—our votes, our choices—are at the mercy of the flawed picture of the world that various media provide.

The "liberty" of *Liberty and the News* is the oddest and most idiosyncratic term in the book. Lippmann is not talking about the liberty of opinion or free expression that John Milton defended in *Areopagitica* (1644). In fact, Lippmann takes Milton to task for conceding free expression only to Protestant views, whose variations he was indifferent to, while condemning Catholic positions out of hand. Lippmann argues that liberty is the effort to protect for public use access to a factual record. It is the freedom to be roped to the mast of reality and to be freed from allegiance to one or another orthodoxy, preconception or lie. Liberty "is not so much permission as it is the construction of a system of information increasingly independent of opinion." As for opinion journalism, he is caustic. Veracity must come first, not "edification"—and this from a man who was a regular contributor to *The New Republic*, who in 1923 became the editorial page editor of the *New York World* and wrote hundreds of editorials in his years there, and who in the 1930s took on national prominence as a syndicated opinion columnist. The monuments of placing one's opinion first, Lippmann writes in *Liberty and the News*, are "the Inquisition and the invasion of Belgium."

Lippmann looked beyond journalism for a way out of its impasse. He held out some hope for journalism schools, and though he had no specific design for educating reporters he believed that "no amount of money or effort spent in fitting the right men for this work could possibly be wasted, for the health of society depends upon the quality of the information it receives." Yoke the reporters' education to its only legitimate goal: "a professional training in journalism in which the ideal of objective testimony is cardinal."

Lippmann also found reason for hope in the emergence of semi-official institutes of government research and more "specialized private agencies which attempt to give technical summaries of the work of various branches of the government." These "political observatories," as he called them, could improve reporting by interposing an "expert political intelligence" between the reality of government and those who reported on it. Even in the darker view of *Phantom Public*, which Lippmann published in 1925, he saw a flicker of light in the fact that "we live at the mere beginnings of public accounting." There, not in the newsroom, lies hope for an informational system adequate to democ-

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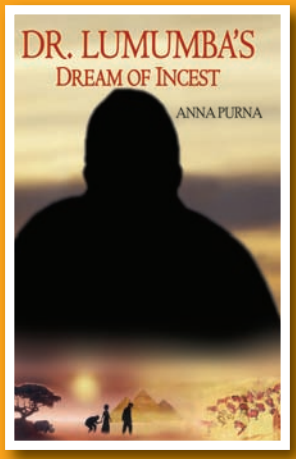

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racy's needs, although Lippmann offers no real analysis of why the observatories would themselves be immune to opinion.

Why republish this old book? In its new format, it features an introduction by Lippmann biographer Ronald Steel, who economically places the book in the context of its day. There's also an afterword, nearly half as long as Lippmann's book, by the journalist, former Clinton Administration insider and newly appointed Clinton (Hillary, that is) adviser Sidney Blumenthal. Blumenthal begins by briefly and perceptively characterizing Lippmann's Olympian stance (at once in and above journalism) and then launches into a lament about the "steady degeneration of the press over the past few decades." He offers no evidence of "degeneration" (which would require comparing a deficient present with a measurably better past) but instead only vents his frustration that today's media largely parroted Bush Administration propaganda during the run-up to the Iraq War.

There is no denying Blumenthal's central point, especially since the *New York Times* itself apologized, in an editorial note of May 26, 2004, for coverage that was "not as rigorous as it should have been." But such journalistic failings—and there were many, at the *Times* and other outlets—do not demonstrate a "steady degeneration" of the news media. The press was slow to criticize the Vietnam War, too; in both the media and in public opinion, there was a reflexive back-our-boys-in-harm's-way patriotism that did much to secure a relatively pliant press years into that war. A study of media coverage of forty-two foreign policy crises between 1945 and 1999 (written by political scientists John Zaller and Dennis Chiu) found the media to be consistently, as the article's title puts it, "government's little helper." The study suggests that docile news coverage was a result of "source indexing," in which news represents or "indexes" the range of opinions of leading government officials in the executive and the Congress, and "power indexing," in which news emphasizes most of all the views of those with the greatest capacity to "foretell future events." Coverage is normally docile, in other words, because it concentrates on the views of government officials whose hands are on or close to the levers of power.

Was this any different between 2001 and 2003? Why would it have been, when the conditions for giving the Administration the benefit of the doubt were so strong? Consider the obstacles to skepticism: Saddam Hussein was indefensible; 9/11 was traumatizing, and it produced shock and awe from which we have yet to recover. The Democrats in the Senate backed the Iraq War. Colin Powell, the Administration official with the greatest public trust, personally made the case for war. And yes, just as Lippmann would have expected, journalists accompanying the troops into Baghdad in those first euphoric days were led by their hope into believing that maybe, just maybe, the Bush Administration had known something the rest of us did not.

Blumenthal hopes for a revitalized journalism as "part of a general reawakening of American democracy," though he doesn't bother to offer any details about how such a revitalization might occur or what it would actually entail. Lippmann, in contrast, was not in the general-reawakening business, although near the end of *Liberty and the News* he suggests that substantial change can come "only if organized labor and militant liberalism set a pace which cannot be ignored." But what he wishes from such a mobilization is the establishment of nonpartisan information agencies. Journalism did not have the horsepower or the moral discipline to picture the political scene accurately on its own.

If there is a rationale for republishing *Liberty and the News*, it surely must be to give Lippmann's diagnosis and prescriptions a further airing. If we do, we see not only new energy in journalism education (the effect of which is not easy to know) but clear evidence that Lippmann's political observatories have taken hold. We have a Freedom of Information Act (passed in 1966); we have inspectors general (most of them instituted only in 1978). Whether one looks at the inspector general at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, whose report in November 2005 led instantly to the resignation of the conservative hack Kenneth Tomlinson, or the recent reports from the FBI IG and the CIA IG, which have provided the news media and Congress fodder for criticism, further investigation and closer surveillance of these agencies, journalists have an array of tools institutionalized within and outside government that, in 1920, Lippmann could only have dreamed of.

Journalism today has many of the allies Lippmann longed for. Congress has some of the independent assistance he hoped it would gain in struggling against the executive's informational advantage—the Congressional Budget Office, the Governmental Accountability Office and the inspectors general. In "A Test of the News," Lippmann even applauded interest groups (citing the Interchurch World Movement and the Popular Government League) for their reports on media coverage of topics of special con-

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cern to them. In these instances Lippmann heralded the emergence of "a powerful engine of criticism…appearing in the community which will no longer naively accept the current news on contentious questions." He may as well have been talking about the blogosphere.

How effective are the accounting and monitorial agencies inside the government? How valuable are the various partisan and nonpartisan nongovernmental watchdogs and think tanks that have proliferated since the 1960s? How useful have universities been in attending to questions of public policy? (Lippmann thought they could help only by getting away from thinking that "terminates in doctor's theses and brown quarterlies.") Can the media give the best of these political observatories greater attention? Can Congress? Or are there so many political observatories across the landscape now that they no longer illuminate the night sky but block it by the lights of their own self-advertisement?

This is where an inquiry in the spirit of Walter Lippmann should begin—by evaluating whether the reforms he prescribed, all of which have come to pass, have improved the press as he thought they would. If journalism remains as bad as ever despite the emergence of numerous skillful and bold political observatories, then Lippmann's reform agenda, and probably his analysis, is proven wrong. On the other hand, if the flaws Lippmann saw in journalism have been corrected by the reforms he proposed and journalism still failed to give due warning that deliberate lies, executive hubris and an administration's unembarrassed disregard for veracity were leading the United States into a blunder of gigantic proportion, then *Liberty and the News* mistakes the location of the crisis of democracy.

I favor this second view, for in the end *Liberty and the News* is naïve. It expresses astonishing faith in the notion that if objective fact is protected and honestly communicated to the general public, democracy will work because decisions will be based on public understandings anchored in fair media renderings of reality. This simplifies the informational requirements of democratic governance beyond recognition. It gives no place to the micropolitics of communication—to a leadership driven by ambitions or by fears it is unable or unwilling to communicate honestly to the public or to put on the table to Congress for discussion and revision; to an executive branch cowed into deference by a bullying White House; to the strong inclination of citizens to mold perception of facts (did we find WMDs in Iraq? did Osama bin Laden conspire with Saddam on the 9/11

Edward Hopper: August in the City, 1945

You've got to learn how to dance and speak lots of languages
and pull ideas out of your hat. You've got to have
a way of conducting yourself
that's nonconformist and nuts.
You've got to radicalize the programs
over the years. You've got to want two kids.
You've got to pass the world
through the sieve of a clear vision
or, when the chips are down,
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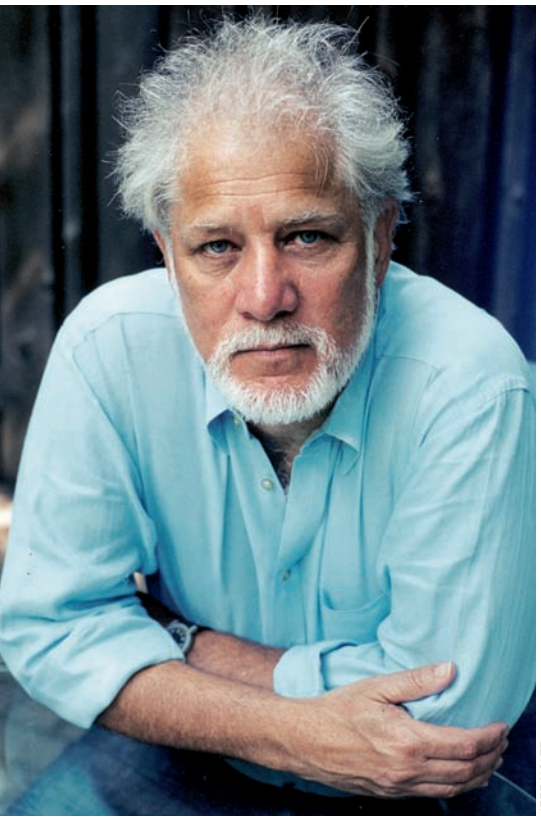
attacks?) to their political preferences; and to the polarization of party politics so that a conservative evangelical base is all but unwavering in support of a conservative born-again President while independents and moderates are confused and divided.

Nothing in *Liberty and the News* predicts or prevents or pretends to understand any of this. True, much of our best journalism failed us—and when it did not, there were not sufficiently strong forces to take up the facts and force their full consideration. Journalistic failure is not independent of failures of other institutions with an obligation to speak truth to power, and to speak it again if no one listens the first time: the opposition (especially Democrats in Congress), intelligence and military officers who believe the President is making a mistake, university scholars who sometimes support military interventions and so may have credibility in opposing the intervention at hand. Yes, some individuals said the sky was falling, but most of us had heard that before, and did not see the sky fall, and we had few resources for recognizing it when it did. ■

Memorable Gestures

by TONY EPRILE

I first encountered Michael Ondaatje's work twenty years ago when I picked up a slim volume titled *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*. It was a chance encounter, but I was immediately struck by the book's wildly original way of providing a



JEFF NOLTE

detailed portrait of a man whose mythological stature overshadows the few known facts of his life. When I sought out this quirky experimental novel again recently in the Iowa City public library (thinking to use it in my writing workshop as an example of effective character sketches), it was classified as nonfiction, perhaps because the librarians simply didn't know what to make of it. The book uses various devices to portray the notorious outlaw: a series of sketches of the characters who surrounded him, newspaper interviews (that may be real or made up), the occasional picture and the thoughts ascribed to him by a dime novelist who is the putative narrator of the novel. I was looking for a passage that had stuck with me for more than two decades, a portrait of Pat Garrett that I wanted to share with my students. It goes, in part:

> Pat Garrett, ideal assassin. Public figure, the mind of a doctor, his hands hairy, scarred, burned by rope, on his wrist there was a purple stain there all his life. Ideal assassin for his mind was unwarped. Had the ability to kill someone on the street walk back and finish a joke.…
>
> At the age of 15 he taught himself French and never told anyone about it and never spoke to anyone in French for the next 40 years. He didn't even read French books.

Although I still love this passage (this novel and Ondaatje's memoir *Running in the Family* are my particular favorites), reading it again I can't help but notice the distinctive flaws in the writing as much as the pleasures it offers. Here is a character portrait that actually reveals almost nothing about the character's underlying personality. Here are enigmatic utterances (how can someone who kills without affect have an "unwarped" mind?) and the occasional lapse in grammar—that unnecessary second "there" after "purple stain." Most striking is the idiosyncratic description of Garrett's act of teaching himself a language he will neither use nor take credit for knowing. It's a memorable gesture, but what the hell does it mean, and are we really to believe it?

Ondaatje's work is filled with such memorable gestures, like the scene in *In the Skin of a Lion* when, suspended in midair from the central arch, Nicholas Temelcoff, an immigrant worker, reaches out and elegantly catches a nun who has fallen off the unfinished bridge that he is helping to build. In that instant she decides to stop being a nun, and neither of them tells the larger world that she has survived the fall. Temelcoff's arm is pulled out of its socket by the force of the falling body, and as the nun jerks it back into place he almost passes out. A similar scene occurs in Ondaatje's new novel, *Divisadero*, when a young woman's father "torques" her dislocated shoulder back into place.

Ondaatje likes to repeat certain picturesque scenarios, usually involving dangerous acts of gymnastic skill. Roman, a minor character in *Divisadero*, is a craftsman who, like Temelcoff, hangs from rafters and balances precariously on beams suspended in midair as he works alone high up in the belfry of a church that is being restored. David Caravaggio, who appears in both *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The English Patient*, is another solitary, "a thief who refused to work with men because he did not trust them." He moves around in the dark in silence while the inhabitants of the places he is robbing sleep unsuspectingly—Caravaggio had practiced his art of silent intrusion at home by rearranging the furniture at night as his wife slept—and he runs across roofs at night and swings from one veranda to another.

A surprising proportion of Ondaatje's writing consists of meticulous and well-researched descriptions of arcane craftsmen at work—always with that element of peril. The most famous of these is of Kip, the bomb defuser in *The English Patient*, who painstakingly puzzles out the fuse wires on unexploded German ordnance, a wrong move being certain death, while the reader holds his breath with each snip of wire. Occasionally, a woman lends a hand—literally. "He picked the wire like a thin adder from her left hand. Then the other. She didn't move away," Ondaatje writes.

> Stepping up to her, he cut the wire below her left fist before the theorem faded, the sound like something bitten through with a tooth. He saw the dark print of her dress along her

Divisadero
By Michael Ondaatje.
Knopf. 273 pp. $25.

Tony Eprile is the author of The Persistence of Memory.

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shoulder, against her neck. The bomb was dead. He dropped the cutters and put his hand on her shoulder, needing to touch something human.

These moments of heightened detail, when there is either real danger present or some drama of the elements—rain (usually a thunderstorm) or fire—serve as foreplay (or sometimes as the sublimated equivalent of sex) in Ondaatje's work. In *Divisadero*, when Anna and Coop, who grew up as virtual siblings, make love for the first time, it is almost the natural culmination of the meticulous physical labor Coop has put into building a cabin on a hillside. Anna walks up to Coop's cabin and gets caught at the last moment in "a sudden and heavy rain…so whatever she wore was transformed. Everything felt heavy, was darker." Coop, sitting on that deck suspended in the air, hasn't even noticed the rain, and just before the two disrobe each other, Ondaatje interrupts with Anna's thoughts on how far she is from her house:

> It would take a bird five minutes to swim through the air all the way back to the farmhouse, she thought. It would not, of course, move so formally, it would use sweeps and curves, preferring diversions, and be influenced by the surface of the earth.… A car could make it in four. An unhurried horse in ten.

Sexual tension is diverted into detail and scenery, and when Anna and Coop are caught in the act of lovemaking by her father, they are lying high up in the air; thunder explodes over the deck "as if it had come down a funnel onto their nakedness."

In interviews, Ondaatje has expressed his disinterest in plot and has described his novel-writing method as being like putting together a mosaic or a collage. If *Divisadero* is a collage, it is one that sometimes seems to have been assembled with bits and pieces from the author's other novels. The structure is identical to that of *Anil's Ghost* and *The English Patient*—two different sets of protagonists with their own lives and adventures who tangentially connect with each other. The early part of the book is about three unrelated young people raised in Northern California by the same father: Anna is his biological child, whose mother died in childbirth; another girl, Claire, the offspring of a stranger who died the same night in the maternity ward, was given to him by the hospital as some sort of compensation; the boy, Coop (who is treated almost as a servant), is a neighbor who was the only survivor of a family massacre by a disgruntled hired hand.

The tandem narrative features Lucien Segura, a French writer, solitary and "difficult as a bear," who settles in his old age in a house in the remote Gers region of France. The thin cord connecting the two tales is Anna's discovery in the archives at the University of California, Berkeley, of a sound recording of Segura reading his poems, at which point she decides to write a biography of him. She winds up staying in Segura's house in the countryside, where she has an affair with a Gypsy—the son of a thief who helped Segura find his rural retreat—and contemplates the poet's life. (It's left ambiguous whether the life of Segura that we read is imagined by Anna, his biographer, or the unnamed narrator.)

In his earlier works, a parallel narrative structure allowed Ondaatje to underscore larger political themes: the fate of immigrant workers and the destruction of working men by the indifferent forces of progress in *In the Skin of a Lion*; the many moral differences between the Eastern worldview and the Western one in *The English Patient* and *Anil's Ghost*. It's hard to tell what purpose the parallel narratives serve in *Divisadero* other than to offer a backdrop for Ondaatje's bravura descriptions of rafter-climbing, card sleights of hand, a doctor's struggle with diphtheria in World War I and a young boy's wild ride on the back of a mare.

Other devices that seem to have a hold on Ondaatje's imagination crop up in *Divisadero*. One example is the presence of a man whose identity has been erased by violence and whom women now feel compelled to resurrect. In *The English Patient*, the eponymous hero has had his identity fragmented by his violent fall from the sky, his physical distinctiveness virtually annihilated by fire. He is taken care of by Hana, who sees something sacred and restorative in his suffering. The erased man in *Anil's Ghost* is an anonymous skeleton, nicknamed Sailor, that Anil, a forensic scientist, has unearthed. For these dry bones she is willing to sacrifice the life of her guide, an archaeologist named Sarath. *Divisadero*'s Coop, too, loses his memory through violence. He is ferociously beaten by gangsters who had tried to rope him into using his card skills for their benefit—in an elaborate and improbable scheme involving a beautiful drug-addicted woman who is used as bait to entrap him. Coop returns to a state of near-saintly innocence, with "nothing older than a few days in what he remembered." Claire, his virtual sibling, who has loved him but not made love to him (unlike Anna), takes responsibility for him and tries to heal him by bringing him back to their childhood home. At this point their narrative

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ends, as if each has fulfilled his or her fictional role by falling into this familiar pattern, the same dull coin pulled from behind an unwilling ear.

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There is an odd, amateurish clumsiness to *Divisadero*, given Ondaatje's prolific accomplishments as a writer. It manifests itself in such things as the frequently self-conscious references to other writers and works of literature: quotes from Nabokov and Annie Dillard, mention of Jean Valjean from *Les Misérables*, anecdotes from the lives of Tolstoy, William Styron and Colette. The prose can be just plain clunky: "As close as she was to Lucien, the idea of physical passion between them had not existed in her mind." Or it can strain one's credulity entirely: "At night, when he returned to the farmhouse, the two lamps Marie-Neige had lit and hung above their door frame allowed him to leave the roadway…and as he came over the rise, up out of the valley, and saw them, he gave a long howl like that of a wolf, and she would know he was near.… No, there are no wolves, Marie-Neige would say if asked, never revealing the source, and they never believed her certainty. It was in a way the tenderest communication between her and her husband."

Ondaatje has long prided himself on his avoidance of conventional narrative structures. His preferred approach is stated through the thoughts of Patrick Lewis in *In the Skin of a Lion*: "His own life was no longer a single story but part of a mural, which was a falling together of accomplices…a wondrous night web." In Ondaatje's most successful works, those circus acts (flying nuns, skilled men planting or defusing explosives) provide a vivid and memorable texture that works toward his larger philosophical purposes—such as exploring the impossibility of the brown-skinned colonial subject's really fitting in to the closed world of the English, even though he might daily risk his life on their behalf (Kip in *The English Patient*), or creating many portraits of the irremediable solitariness of exiles and the displaced. In *Divisadero*, the flamboyant gestures don't seem to add up to much of anything. There is an attempt to establish a parallel between the Gulf War and World War I, but it serves more to create a space for a well-described set piece about the sufferings of the ill and wounded. There is a nod toward the nobility of those who do skilled, hard work with their hands—offset by a romance-novel vision of wild peasant revelry and strong, inarticulate men howling like wolves at their spouses. But, as with any big-top performance, once you see the guy wire holding up the trapeze artist, the moth-eaten state of the lions' skin, the coin disappearing up the sleeve of the ringmaster, the magic quickly starts to fade. ■

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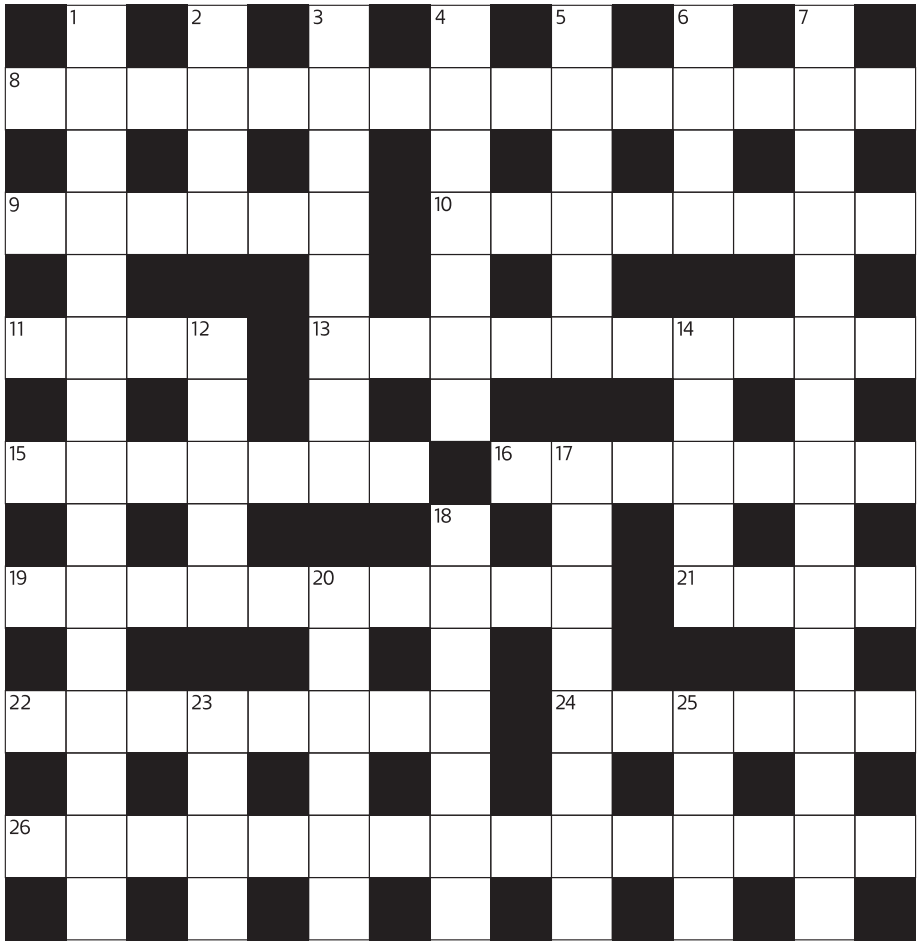

ACROSS

8 Coming back to eat at first, but sick as a cuckoo with a tailless mouse—only the last half! How cowardly! (15)

9 What you pay the professional, and able without a way to show it, though very weak. (6)

10 An irregular fighter, but just a portion is an example of it. (8)

11 Perhaps a relic of a fight with a non-union type. (4)

13 To a body they might be considered very manipulating! (10)

15 It might be game to cheat also, but it's all right to sort of snore around it! (7)

16 One short measure spoken of, which is very wrong! (7)

19 Substitutes for the blunt that are mild, in a manner of speaking. (10)

21 The First Lady has a point, just so! (4)

22 A dilapidated hat allowed here, with 99 to be the active muscular type. (8)

24 and **2** down One doesn't want to be caught here, not in where stockings sometimes belong. (3,2,1,4)

26 Amateurs don't display it. (15)

DOWN

1 Great types like Toscanini transfer heat to the ultimate extent. (15)

2 See 24 across

3 Very puritanical person, but one hears it's what he did with the cold. (8)

4 What you do to the contract and quit going up with things dipped into by classic writers. (7)

5 Changed by more letters as a rudimentary stage. (6)

6 The highest point reached by the Japanese, possibly. (4)

7 No fuzzy thinking with it! (It's apparent, going in the direction of a supposedly monstrous lake.) (15)

12 See 25

14 Stein said this is this, and made some getup! (5)

17 Briefly assorted unto the possible end, as you do when you get the wrong number. (8)

18 One might tell just what you're thinking! (An afterthought on your head? Very stylish!) (7)

20 The most quiet virtue in Taoism has to get set around it. (6)

23 A disorganized file goes along with liberty and the pursuit of happiness. (4)

25 and **12** What one pays to get across with a noted killer, and where one pays it. (4-5)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3108

Q	U	I	E	T	U	S	■	D	O	G	T	R	O	T
U	■	N	■	I	■	A	■	I	■	I	■	U	■	R
O	P	T	I	M	U	M	■	V	E	R	A	N	D	A
N	■	E	■	E	■	O	■	I	■	L	■	N	■	P
S	U	G	A	R	■	A	N	D	■	S	P	I	C	E
E	■	E	■	■	■	N	■	E	■	■	■	N	■	Z
T	A	R	T	A	N	S	■	S	P	A	N	G	L	E
■	■	■	■	D	■	■	■	■	■	G	■	■	■	■
F	A	L	L	O	U	T	■	T	H	E	R	M	O	S
L	■	O	■	■	■	U	■	E	■	■	■	A	■	C
Y	O	U	N	G	■	M	A	N	■	F	L	Y	E	R
L	■	D	■	R	■	U	■	P	■	U	■	D	■	O
E	Z	E	K	I	E	L	■	I	N	S	T	A	L	L
A	■	S	■	P	■	U	■	N	■	E	■	Y	■	L
F	E	T	T	E	R	S	■	S	A	D	I	S	T	S

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